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LIKE A WOMAN: PLAYING THE FEMININE HOMOSEXUAL
AS TRUTH IN KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

by

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B.A. Flagler College, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Identity, who we are, is at the core of every human being, thus at the core of every character from every play. How the character identifies his self through gender and sexual identity will shape both physical and emotional choices that an actor will make through the rehearsal process.

As an actor, it is absolutely imperative to resist the urge to pass judgment on the characters we portray. As more characters in modern drama are openly gay, there is an increasing urge for an actor to fall into campy stereotypes. Through a performance of the role of Molina in Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, this thesis will examine the blurring line of gender identity of the leading man in contemporary drama and explore the challenges of portraying a feminine man in a non-stereotypical way, remaining true to the identification of the character.

A thorough historical analysis presents a look at the evolution of the homosexual throughout modern drama, from self-loathing party boys of the seventies to ordinary fathers, husbands, and sons in modern households. A structural analysis of Puig's text will aid in the choices made by the actor. Lastly, a complete character analysis will examine the psychological motivations behind Molina's actions as well as the changes in his gender and sexual identity throughout the piece. This thesis will culminate in a comprehensive development, rehearsal and performance journal, which will document and address challenges, discoveries, failures and victories during the production process.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“That was my work of art, to bring together to scorned objects to share with them a moment of life.”

Manuel Puig, The Buenos Aires Affair.

In Act One of Manuel Puig’s *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Molina, one of the show’s two central characters, asks of Valentin, his cellmate in prison and the other central character, “What’s wrong with being soft like a woman? Why can’t a man...be sensitive if he feels like it” (Puig 1359). Here lies a central concern for the male actor.

With the gay rights movement alive and well in American society, we find ourselves surrounded by more and more homosexual characters. As these characters come to life, we, the audience, begin to see a varied spectrum of what it means to be homosexual. Terrence McNally’s *Love! Valour! Compassion!* deals with a large, varied spectrum of homosexuals, exploring a wide range of homosexual individuals. Richard Greenberg’s *Take Me Out* addresses homosexuality from a more masculine point of view. Tony Kushner explores homosexuals through the eye of a Jewish American. Lanford Wilson examines homosexuality with an eye on family life in his *Talley Trilogy*. Lisa Kron and Paula Vogel capture a snapshot of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community with lesbian issues on the forefront in their shows *Well* and *And Baby Makes Seven*, respectively. In *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Puig adds a complication to the character of Molina, who not only identifies himself as a homosexual but also as a woman.

The extra layer of Molina’s gender-identification creates difficulty in portraying this particular character. As a homosexual man myself, I do not identify with the female

sex, and often more feminine homosexual characters are played either as drag queens, as in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, or for comedic effect, such as the character Buzz in McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!*. Playing the role of Molina in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* forced me to answer the question: How do I play the feminine homosexual in an honest way without leaning towards drag or camp? I knew in order to play the character with the playwright's intended honesty that I was going to have to understand not only the given circumstances of the play but also what it means to be a woman seen through a homosexual lens.

Kiss of the Spider Woman is the most widely-known Puig work to American audiences due in large part to the Oscar-winning 1985 film version starring William Hurt (in an Oscar-winning performance as Molina) and the late Raul Julia. With a slew of Oscar nominations and praise from reviewers, the critical success of the American film version cannot be denied. However, one critic commented on Hurt's performance that when "Hurt masculinized Molina at the end, when he dies heroically for a political cause, he defeated Manuel (Puig)'s argument: Molina doesn't have to conform to manly manners to be heroic, effeminate doesn't have to mean cowardly" (Levin, 323). This critic seemed to hit the nerve in the challenge I felt as an actor.

In Sonia Moore's acting textbook, *The Stanislavski System: the Professional Training of an Actor*, she describes the Stanislavski "Magic If" exercise as such:

"An actor must only try to answer the question, 'What would I do if I were in King Lear's position?' This "magic if," as Stanislavski called it, transforms the character's aim into the actor's. It is a strong stimulus to inner and physical actions." (25)

Molina also questions a big “if” in conversation with Valentin saying, “... if all men were like women, then there would be no torturers” (1359).

Both “if” scenarios arouse large questions in this actor’s brain. Stanislavski’s method instigates questions: What if I was in prison? What if I was cellmates with Valentin, a machismo political radical, or someone like him? What if I risked my life to better a political movement I didn’t believe in for the love of a man? All of these are valid questions to aid in getting me into the world in which Molina lives. Molina forces me to question what if I was like a woman? This is a question that gets me into the mind with which Molina lives.

It is true Molina shows a tremendous amount of bravery towards the end of the play. However, that does not usurp the fact he clearly identifies himself as he says “a woman, one hundred percent” (1371). This identification serves as the crucial challenge for this actor. My goal with this thesis document is to have it serve as a guide for any other actor given the opportunity to portray a character they simply don’t identify with, particularly the feminine homosexual.

CHAPTER TWO: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

“Life is so difficult.”
-Molina

Biography of Molina Puig

Not much is known about the life of Manuel Puig. That said, there is enough information about the author for Puig to serve as a significant and crucial part of my research. For the purposes of my process, I have decided to concentrate on the details of Puig’s life that have influenced *Kiss of the Spider Woman* with the greatest impact.

Manuel Puig is an author best known by American audiences for the work *Kiss of the Spider Woman* because the film adaptation of this work received critical and commercial success in the mid-eighties and the musical adaptation won seven Tony awards in the mid-nineties. Although Americans know him best for this work, Latin American audiences are more familiar with his literary works as part of their greater landscape of contemporary writers who use more progressive forms of non-linear narratives. According to the Dictionary of Literary Biographies, Puig remains amongst the ranks of great South American writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa who developed and utilized the “new” narrative during the 1960’s. While these writers were world travelers, their works remain essential to the Latin American identity because although the authors were worldly, their works remained firmly rooted in South American culture (Dictionary of Literary Biographies 2).

Puig was born in the Province of Buenos Aires in the small town of General Villegas on 28 December 1932. He spent the majority of his formative years in this small town with his family. He was the first-born child of Baldomero, a businessman, and Maria, a chemist. In her book, *Manuel Puig and the Spider Woman: His Life and Fictions*, close friend and biographer Suzanne Jill Levine recounts that his mother Maria Ellen, or Mele for short, was a transplant in this small town and only had moved there in 1929 with the plan to stay for a year and earn a little money. She and Manuel would often return to the city of La Plata and here Manuel found his one true muse, film. (Levine 1-34). Manuel often said that he spent his childhood from age 6 collecting advertisements of film premieres from the Buenos Aires newspapers and organizing them by date. He would spend hours memorizing what films came out when, a practice he called a “terrible use of memory” (Levine X). Levine continues to flesh out Puig’s young life with details of his nightly trips to the local cinema houses. “I would attend the 6 o’clock show every evening” (Levine 8). These cinema houses introduced Puig to his favorite actresses, Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth and Simone Simon, preferring these actresses to others because they were “earthy.”

Life in General Villegas wasn’t all movies. Truth be told, the films were an escape from the everyday life that Puig and his family endured. They were not poor by any means, but they weren’t living in the city. As a chemist, Mele was forced to the countryside because of the pace in which the universities were churning out chemistry degrees. As a result, finding work in the city as a chemist became increasingly difficult, and when a position in a small pharmacy opened up in General Villegas, Mele leaped at the opportunity to make money. Puig’s father, Baldomero, and she had dated for a year

previous to the move, but it wasn't until she moved away that he realized he couldn't be without her. He showed up on her doorstep one day and asked her to marry him. The two were married that day, and a year later Manuel was born. The couple was educated and both were gainfully employed. This made them more financially stable than many of the others in town, and thus victims of envy. (Levine 18).

Although many were envious, Quica Brown, who worked for Mele, remembered her as “the model housewife. She liked the house to be orderly, she liked to cook, clean, decorate. She starched all the clothes. She was pretty, good, gentle” (Levine 19).

Levine infers these qualities become the obsession of Molina in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, as well as Puig's lead character, Toto, in *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*.

Growing up queer in Argentina was unthinkable. Puig was always seen as different by the culture of his community. Latin America was under the influence of a machismo society.

Perhaps the most complicated aspect of the idea of machismo stems from the fact that until fairly recently the term may have been more broadly used in the United States than in many parts of the Spanish-speaking world. Although elsewhere in the world macho always has had a negative connotation when referring to humans—it originates in a term that designates the male of an animal species (hembra being the female)—in Latin America the term has a somewhat different history. Only in the 1990s did the term come into vogue more broadly in Latin America; earlier it was mainly utilized to refer to culturally determined forms of masculinity by intellectuals and activists involved in examining and struggling against oppressive regimes grounded in ideas and relations of gender/sexuality systems in journalistic writing, social science studies, and feminist critique of the oppression of women and gays. (Machismo – Bibliography).

This machismo society existed in Latin America throughout Puig's childhood and molded the relationships he had with both his mother and his father. He grew closer to his mother as he drifted away from his father. Levine suggests the lack of male parental figures in Puig's novels are almost a direct result of this upbringing. Furthermore, there

is no way to deny the direct affects the machismo culture had on *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The oppression of woman and homosexuals are themes of most of Puig's works. However, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* has struck a cord with so many because, as translator Allen Baker put it, "this is his most overtly political and overtly sexual piece." Baker implies that of all Puig's works, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is most influenced by the machismo culture. It is the direct reaction to his childhood.

Not much is known of Puig's schooling. He did attend a British boarding school in 1946 in Buenos Aires. From there he moved to Rome to attend University and study film at the pretegious Vittorio de Sica. After which he moved from Paris to London before moving back to Buenos Aires in 1967. Puig was disappointed with the Peron dictatorship and fled to Brazil in 1973 and then to New York in 1976. New York remained his home until the time of his death in 1990. Although the death certificate read "complications from an infection of the Gallbladder," many still speculate the reality of this cause and wonder if the real cause was AIDS-related.

Film Influences on Manuel Puig and the Character of Luis Alberto Molina

There is no denying that both the life of Manuel Puig and the character of Luis Alberto Molina are influenced by the art of film. Puig said of his childhood influences, "For me literature was a secondary thing... like listening to music, like looking at a painting.... All my expectations, all my attention, was on movies," (Lavers 4). Consequently, many of his characters are obsessed with film, and his literary works have often been compared to a film narrative rather than a traditional literature narrative. It is also interesting to note his literary works were left nearly unnoticed by the general public

until the popular American film version of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* premiered. When considering *Kiss of the Spider Woman* as a piece of theater art, it is important to note the English stage reincarnation of the novel premiered after the American film premiere. Therefore, the American film also holds an influence on the theater piece as well. For this thesis project I have, in the interest of time, narrowed the influences I will concentrate on the one film influence, *Cat People*, expressed in this stage adaptation of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

Irina and Molina

The similarities between Irina in the film *Cat People* and the character of Molina from *Kiss of the Spider Woman* are clear. Both represent stifled sexuality. Both are searching for the love of men who will protect them. And finally, both characters have a fear of their own futures.

In *Cat People*, Irina comes from a village where women are transformed into panthers upon sexual arousal. Irina feels she is one of these women. This fear prevents her from engaging in intimacy with men. She is afraid she will turn into a panther and kill him. After years of drawing panthers in the zoo, she comes across a dashing, young stranger. The dashing, young stranger highlights Irina's fears. Much like Irina, Molina is also fearful of his sexuality. It is his sexuality that has gotten him into prison. Furthermore, because of his illegal homosexuality, Molina has repressed his sexual urges by building up unrealistic expectations for his ideal lovers. When Valentin asks about his dating habits and why he doesn't date other homosexuals, Molina answers he "only goes to bed with real men" (Puig 1371). Thus, Molina never can relate romantically, "because," as he says, "what a man wants is a woman" (Puig 1371). He has established

an impossible goal for himself. Irina couldn't allow herself to become romantic because of her fear of becoming a panther. Molina couldn't because of his fear of law. Just like Irina comes across a young stranger, Molina comes across his own young stranger. Molina's sexual repression is highlighted by the entrance of Valentin at the very beginning of the show. Valentin represents Molina's dream man. He is strong, masculine, heterosexual, and able to control a woman. He represents everything Molina is seeking in a man. Valentin's heterosexuality will prevent a lasting relationship. More importantly, if the two were to get too familiar with one another, Valentin's connection to outside political radicals would be a certain death sentence for Molina. Where Irina fears intimacy because she is afraid of what she will do to others, Molina fears intimacy with Valentin because of what it might do to Molina.

The shape of Irina's relationship to Oliver, the architect in the film, and the shape of Molina's relationship to Valentin are crafted by Puig to be similar. Throughout the play, as the film is being told by Molina, Molina's relationship with Valentin almost mirrors the relationship between Irina and Oliver. Important to note are both the similarities and differences in the relationships. As the character of Irina becomes more daring in allowing her panther woman desires to surface, Molina tempts fate by allowing his desires to please Valentin surface. Where Irina's desires distance her from Oliver by letting her "inner self" out, Molina's desires bring him closer to Valentin by letting his "inner self" out. Both Irina's desires and Molina's desires bring the characters to death. Molina's desires come from a place of love and trust. Irina's desires come from jealousy and hate.

Both relationships are tainted with fear. Irina is fearful she will turn into a panther. She doesn't want a man to touch her, specifically Oliver. Molina fears what his cellmate might tell him. He doesn't want to get too close to Valentin. He knows he will have to tell the warden whatever Valentin tells him about his political activities. Irina knows she will kill Oliver if they get too close. Molina knows the same thing is true with Valentin. For the first part of *Cat People*, Irina keeps herself at a distance pleading with Oliver, "Give me time to get over this something evil in me" (Simon). She, as Molina tells us, sleeps alone in bed while he sleeps on the couch. She paints, reads, and wanders the city alone. For the first part of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Molina does the same as he wanders around his cell during the story. He dismisses all discussion of anything personal for the first two scenes of the show. This keeps both Valentin and him safe. Eventually, Molina and Valentin begin to posit questions to one another about their outside lives. This highlights the major difference in the two relationships. Molina and Valentin are stuck in the cell while Irina and Oliver are free to leave each other's company.

The cell that binds Valentin and Molina forces a quickened intimacy that Irina and Oliver are free of. Irina may feel like a caged animal, but Molina and Valentin are caged animals. Where Oliver goes to work everyday leaving Irina at home, Molina and Valentin spend every moment of every day together in the cell. Oliver and Irina are granted the freedom of having separate lives, which leads to the demise of their relationship. Molina and Valentin must share their pasts because it is the only thing that individualizes them. Irina can go to the zoo. Oliver can go to the office. Molina and Valentin can only remember such things. As the characters in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*

begin to share stories of their free lives with one another, they become increasingly closer both physically and emotionally. The new intimacy heightens the sense of danger for Molina. Contrastingly, as the characters of *Cat People* begin to spend more and more time alone, they become increasingly separated. The new separation heightens the sense of danger for Irina. The more time she allows herself to be alone or with the panthers in the zoo, the more she yearns to become a panther. Ironically, the more time Molina allows himself to listen to Valentin, the more in love he falls, and the more he yearns to help his cellmate. The two stories are tied together by the sense of bravery displayed by both Molina and Irina towards the end of their respective stories.

She becomes increasingly confident with her identity as a panther woman. He becomes more confident in his identity as a spy. She wears more and more black as the film progresses. He withholds more and more information from the warden, and his requests for favors from the warden become bolder. She talks freely to the psychoanalyst about her fears. He allows Valentin to become sexually intimate with him.

While working on the stage adaptation of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* with British translator Allan Baker, Manuel Puig said Molina's wish was "to avoid roles, to avoid hiding behind a mask" (Levine 260). Both Irina and Molina achieve this. By the end of *Cat People*, Irina has stopped wearing her "mask." By this I mean she is exposed to both Oliver and his colleague, the architect girl, for what she is, a panther woman. Irina has no more secrets. She becomes the panther and kills the psychoanalyst. She lets her hysteria get the best of her and unlocks the panther's cage so it can kill her. Molina achieves his unmasking through his confessions to Valentin. "I want you to be my friend and why not admit it? I want your affection... I want you to like me just the way I am"

(Puig 1370). “If you like, you can do what you want with me... because I want it, too (Puig 1372). Puig offers us a raw glimpse of Molina in these moments. Molina is no longer wearing a mask of pride. He is no longer pretending to be a woman. Like Irina opening the cage to the panther, he has opened himself to Valentin. As Puig would say, they have taken off their masks and are exposing themselves. Irina is free to admit she is different. Molina is free to admit he has feelings.

The final major comparison between Irina and Molina is where they make their transformations. The transformations come in two distinct forms. Irina’s transformation is a literal transformation into a panther. This happens when “the psychiatrist thinks he can cure her ‘frigidity’ by seducing her” (Levine 260). She immediately turns into a panther and kills him, just as she had warned. Molina’s transformation happens in a more metaphorical sense. As he and Valentin are sexually intimate for the first time, Molina transforms. During this sequence he tells Valentin, “It felt like I wasn’t here, there was just you...Or that I wasn’t me any more. As if I was... you” (Puig 1373). This is Molina’s transformation into a new person. He no longer holds the mask of the Molina he was before: cowardly, needy, and selfish. He has become brave, giving, and selfless, all the qualities he admired in Valentin from the beginning. Both transformations are ignited by sex. Molina and Irina are now brave. They are no longer holding on to secret fears and are now free to take off the masks they have worn.

Puig’s title, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, lends the work to be compared to *Cat People*. Both titles are of human-animal hybrids. However, Puig’s title is misleading. There are comparisons to be made between Irina’s journey and Molina’s journey. But spider women and panther women are very different. The panther woman is a predator;

the spider woman is a victim. The panther woman kills her pray; the spider woman nurses you back to health. The panther woman longs for solitude; the spider woman desires companionship. Irina is a panther woman and, as Molina says, “I am not a panther woman. It’s sad to be a panther woman, you can’t kiss anyone or anything else” (Puig 1375). To that Valentin replies, “You’re right. You are a spider woman who traps men in her web” (Puig 1376). However, it’s also sad to be a spider woman, because like the panther woman, the spider woman’s kiss also claims a victim. The victim is herself.

Synopsis of Kiss of the Spider Woman

Kiss of the Spider Woman opens in a prison cell in the infamous Villa Devoto Prison located in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The cell is dark at the beginning of the show, much like a movie theater, and Molina, a gay window dresser imprisoned for the corruption of a minor, is telling the story of one of his favorite movies.

You can see there’s something special about her, that she’s not any ordinary woman. She looks up at the model, the Black Panther lying in its cage in the zoo. But she scratches her pencil against the sketchpad, and the panther sees her. But who’s that behind her? Someone trying to light a cigarette, but the wind blows out the match. He’s no matinee idol, but he’s nice-looking, in a hat with a low brim. He touches the brim like he’s saluting and says that the drawing is terrific. She fiddles with the curls of her hair. (Puig, 1355)

Soon the voice of his cellmate is heard. He is asking if the girl is “a dog” (Puig 1355). This is Valentin, a political radical sent to Villa Devoto on suspected terrorist acts. The first scene continues, and we hear more of the film but learn little more of the two central characters, Molina and Valentin.

As the second scene of the play opens, the film is still being orated by Molina. We begin to learn the artist girl in the zoo and the gentlemen in the hat, an architect, have begun a courtship with one another, but for some reason animals seem to be frightened of her, and she seems to be scared to kiss him. Molina informs us when she kisses, she “keeps her mouth shut tight” (Puig,1356). We learn more about Molina and Valentin, as the film seems to get more personal. Through the next short interchange we learn why both men are in prison: Molina for “gross-indecency” and Valentin for “politics.” We also learn Molina has had some psycho-evaluation done on him:

They (psychologists) are all the same, they all tell me the same thing. That I was fussed over as a kid and that’s why I’m like I am now, that I was clinging to my mother’s skirts, but it’s never too late to straighten out, and all I need is a good woman because there’s nothing better than a good woman. And this is what I tell them... You’re dead right. And since there’s nothing better than a good woman I want be one (Puig 1358).

Here is where we start to see the truth about Molina; arguably the more emotionally open of the two characters.

The next scene opens with the two characters sharing a meal, something that will become more important as the piece moves along. The audience is starting to see the warmth between the two characters. The sharing of the meal turns into a conversation about the reality of heaven and hell. The audience learns Valentin is a Marxist, and he values everything else below his political agenda, including the relationship with his girlfriend on the outside.

As far as the movie is concerned, we learn Irina, the artist, and the architect have been married, and they never have had sexual relations because of her fear to kiss him. We also learn he has hired a young beautiful assistant to work with him at the office. But

before Molina gets back to telling the story, the two prisoners get into an argument because Valentin calls Molina “soft, like a woman.” Molina replies, “What’s wrong with being soft like a woman... if all men were like woman, then there’d be no torturers” (Puig 1359). Agreeing to disagree, Molina returns to the film story. Irina is going to see a psychoanalyst because of her fears. She does and hates him just on his look: charming, tall, handsome with a thin mustache. She leaves the office and goes to the zoo. It seems the day before she had stolen the zookeeper’s key. She puts the key into the lock of the panther cage, then “stands there, musing, rapt in her thoughts” (Puig 1359).

Protesting he can’t remember what happens next, Molina begins to ask Valentin about his life on the outside. When Valentin won’t open up, Molina reveals he is terrified his mother is going to die of heart failure. Reassuring Molina his mother’s health problems aren’t his concern, Valentin tells Molina he misses his girlfriend terribly. The audience learns Valentin and his girlfriend are a part of a sexual revolution as well and don’t believe in monogamy. Valentin’s girlfriend joined the Marxist movement after a conservative upbringing, “French lessons and all” (Puig 1360). But that is all we know; Valentin quickly shirks off the conversation and pleads that the two go to sleep. And they do.

The next scene opens with the two men being served prison food. There are two distinct bowls of food served. One is half the size of the other one. Valentin, the constant martyr, insists Molina have the larger portion. Molina begins to tell the film story once again. Molina says Irina now is consumed with jealousy over the “architect girl.” While describing how Irina stalks the “architect girl” as the panther woman, Molina lets out a loud scream. His stomach is killing him. It’s a sudden shooting pain

through his whole abdomen. Valentin calms him as the stomach pain in Molina gets worse and worse.

The next scene opens with Valentin having the same stomach pains. Molina is trying to tell the movie story as fast as he can so Valentin will forget the pain. Suddenly, Valentin lets out a loud scream and then is silent. He is still awake and shaking but no longer screaming. He has defecated in his pants. Molina quickly becomes Valentin's caregiver. He takes off his own shirt and cleans Valentin with it. Valentin, embarrassed, doesn't want to talk. Molina begins to make some tea and continues with the film story, when Valentin suddenly speaks up and begins to tell Molina about his girlfriend and the political work they have been doing. Refusing to listen, Molina changes the subject and heads to bed.

A few days later, Molina and Valentin are working silently in their room. Valentin is reading a letter and begins to get upset. Valentin reveals how one of his friends has died and now Valentin fears for the life of Marta, his girlfriend, whose name we finally learn. During this breakthrough, the warden interrupts the two gentlemen and calls Molina to his office. It seems Molina has been working with the warden to get information from Valentin. The warden has been poisoning the porridge. That is why the porridge bowl was filled so high and why Molina and Valentin got sick. Molina ends the interchange with the warden by saying he needs to bring back a bag of groceries so he can say his mother had come to visit him. This scene concludes Act I.

The second act opens on a much brighter note. Coming back from the warden's office, Molina has a sack of new food from the outside market. Molina and Valentin begin to talk about the movie again, and in the middle of their conversation, Valentin

says he has to get some things off his chest. He asks Molina to write down a letter he wishes to dictate. Molina says that will be fine and grabs a pencil and paper. The letter is to Marta and talks of Valentin's undying love for her. During the letter, Molina offers to wash Valentin's back, which is covered in sores because Valentin is afraid to bathe because of the poisoning. After Molina washes Valentin's back, Valentin rips up the letter and says it was all rubbish. They continue with the film story, and the scene ends.

The next morning, Valentin, returned to health and some kind of mental sanity, wakes with an erection. This delights Molina to no end. The gentlemen verbally spar a bit, and during the sparring, Valentin suddenly accuses Molina of pampering him. Valentin violently throws some of the new food across the room, and Molina ends up in tears. While Valentin is begging for forgiveness, Molina is suddenly called to the Warden's office.

The Warden threatens Molina, because Molina still hasn't acquired any information that could be useful to the Warden. Molina begs for more time. Molina also suggests if he could be let free that might make Valentin reveal more saying, "Prisoners are like that sir, when one of their pals is leaving, they feel more defenseless than ever" (Puig 1370).

Molina returns to the cell with yet another bag of food. Now being faced with the possibility of being released early, Molina feels more vulnerable than ever. He offers Valentin some of the food he has just received, but Valentin is still embarrassed from the fight they just had and refuses the food. Molina knows Valentin is not supposed to grow close to anyone, but Molina reveals he has a "fondness" for Valentin; however, it's a "fondness as friend, much the same way (he) is kind to (his) mother" (Puig 1370).

Molina explains there is a possibility he will be released or moved soon. Valentin is taken back and tells Molina his “head is all confused” (Puig 1371). Molina continues with the film story. Irina breaks down and tells her husband, the architect, she fears she will turn into a madwoman, or even worse, a panther woman. Molina stops at this point in the story, unable to go on. Guilt stricken about the ulterior motives he’s using against Valentin, he can’t continue. Valentin goes to comfort him with motives of his own. Valentin asks Molina to carry a message out for him. Molina refuses. Valentin goes to Molina and starts to rub his back and chest. The intimacy grows, and Molina asks if he can touch Valentin. Valentin agrees. Molina touches his face and says, “If you like, you can do what with you want with me, because I want it too” (Puig 1372). Valentin tells Molina to be quiet, and the two crawl under the sheets together. They quietly engage in intercourse.

A few weeks have passed when the next scene starts. The two surprisingly cheerful prisoners wake up after a night’s sleep. The two discuss their relationship. Molina explains that when he is with Valentin, he doesn’t feel like a man or a woman. Molina explains that when they are together, he just feels “free.” Valentin agrees. During the conversation, the Warden summons Molina again. Only the Warden’s voice can be heard as he talks on the phone. The Warden says if they release Molina, Molina will lead them to Valentin’s comrades. The Warden has realized Molina is playing both sides of the coin, and he realizes Molina has a closer alliance with Valentin.

Returning to the cell, Molina informs Valentin he has been released. A desperate Valentin asks Molina again to deliver information to the outside. Molina begs not to know anything. Valentin backs down and asks Molina to finish the film. Molina does,

and we learn Irina ends up dead after being attacked by a panther. Molina then asks for a going away present, a single kiss from Valentin. Despite what they had done sexually, they had never kissed. Valentin says he's afraid that Molina is a panther woman, and he will turn into a panther. Molina says he's not a panther woman. "It's sad to be a panther woman, you can't kiss anyone or anything else," Molina says. "You're not a Panther Woman. You are a Spider Woman weaving men into your web," Valentin answers (Puig 1375). The Warden tells Molina to pack his things. As Molina is packing, he asks Valentin for one more thing. Valentin thinks it's the kiss, but Molina tells him he will take the message to the outside. Valentin, overly excited, kisses Molina and whispers the message in his ear. Molina, broken-hearted, leaves his companion.

We find out through narration by the two characters, upon being released, Molina was shot dead and Valentin was tortured. During his torture, a nurse took pity on him and gave him some morphine. While dreaming, Valentin was taken to a distant island where a Spider Woman nursed him back to health.

CHAPTER THREE: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

“Her hairdo is very important, it’s the style that women wear, or used to wear, when they wanted to show that this was a crucial moment in their lives, because the hair all scooped up in a bun, which left the neck bare, gave the woman’s face a certain nobility.”

-Molina

Puig and Molina on Homosexuality

To understand the root of my character research it is important to understand Molina is not the only reflection of the playwright in the piece. In fact, both heterosexual Valentin and homosexual Molina are representations of the playwright’s point of views.

As his name suggests, Molina is Manuel in his sexual preference, while Valentin, a caricature of a Marxist guerilla fighter, fulfills not only Manuel’s wish for a straight lover but also embodies Manuel’s questioning consciousness. Valentin mouths Manuel’s oft-repeated remark that sex is the most innocent thing in the world, and has been corrupted by the roles and meanings assigned to it by social systems. Molina and Valentin represent two sides of Manuel. (Levine 259).

Knowing Puig was a homosexual, but understanding he had a less conservative view of the female role in society than the outspoken Molina has, is important to understanding the greater character arch of the show. It is true Molina is a homosexual. He is a homosexual who idolizes women. That being said, he has a rather conservative view of the female role in society. His views on relationships are rather traditional as well. When Valentin questions monogamy, Molina responds, “But it’s beautiful when a couple love each other for ever and ever. It’s my dream” (Puig 1360). Molina’s views on relationships are traditional because he believes he is a woman, and therefore, doesn’t hold to the notion he is “abnormal” in anyway because of his homosexuality. This isn’t

to say he is out of touch in any way with reality. He knows he is a man. He knows he dates other men. He knows he is a homosexual. He doesn't deny that. On the contrary, his homosexuality seems to have made his life much more difficult. In Act Two, Scene Two, he clearly expresses he knows of other gay men who like to date other gay men, "but (I) don't go in for those little games. I am a normal woman, I only go to bed with men" (Puig 1371). This sentence implies homosexuals, in Molina's opinion, aren't men. His plight is he knows he is a man but feels more like a woman. He also knows real men only want to go to bed with real women.

Puig's views on homosexuality are starkly different. He once said:

For me homosexuality doesn't exist. Heterosexuality doesn't either. Sex isn't transcendental – it's as necessary as eating and sleeping, an activity of the vegetative life. What's transcendental for me is affection. Sex doesn't define anything. Our sick old society one day decided that sex had a meaning and a weight, with guilt and who knows what. Sex is a toy that's been given to people to have fun with to help them forget about diseases and death and bad weather. Sex has no meaning beyond the fun that it is. I don't think there's a difference between men and women except for what they have between their legs. The distinction between masculinity and femininity, the whole notion of role-playing, isn't natural. When people ask me, "Are you gay?" I say, "I'm a person." I'm not defined by what I eat for breakfast, which, for me, is as important as the kind of sex I have. Sex is innocence, a toy – we shouldn't let it get spoiled by associating it with such heavy meaning. (Levine 261).

Both Puig and Molina have blurred lines of sexuality. Molina lives in a world where his sexual and gender identity define who he is as a person. He's a self-described woman, a self-described faggot, a self-described screaming queen, and a self-described queer. Puig lives in a much different world where he only describes himself as a person. And though it's true that by the end of the play Molina would describe himself in a fashion similar to Puig's, Molina doesn't start with Puig's mind set. What I found important about the study of Puig's views on sexuality is it marks the ending point of Molina's journey.

Molina grows from his limited views on love and sex to a place as transcendental as Puig's views of honest affection. Molina never tells Valentin he loves him. He says he is affectionate towards him. Molina never says he wants to have sex with Valentin. He merely asks for his affection. When Molina finally does offer his body to Valentin, he simply says, "You can do what you want with me, because I want it too" (Puig 1372). His offer is simple. It is not about sex. It is an offer of affection. It is in this place we see the most growth of Molina. Molina describes the moments after making love with Valentin as if he was "neither male nor female" (Puig 1374). And while making love with Valentin, Molina simply says he "wasn't here, nor anywhere" (Puig 1973). These statements coincide more with Puig's views on human sexuality than they do with Molina's views on sexuality at the beginning of the piece, marking a great transformation to the character. This growth is what the audience is allowed to watch. This growth is what makes the character interesting. This growth is shared between both Valentin and Molina. This growth is what makes this story worth telling.

Evolution of Molina in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*

John Lennon once said, "All you need is love." For Molina, this is most certainly true. Molina is searching for love, or Puig's transcendental affection, in one way or another from the beginning of the play, when he is nursing Valentin's wounds and comforting him after telling him the plot to his favorite movie, until the end of the play, when he sacrifices his life for Valentin in order to prove his love. Molina's quest to find love and companionship is what drives his every move. The love of his mother is what drives him to spy. The love for Valentin is what allows him to have the courage to turn on the warden. All Molina truly needed was love.

As I began working on the character of Molina, it became clear to me on his quest for love Molina plays several roles of his own. He is Molina the Prisoner when the show opens and throughout the scenes with the Warden. He is Molina the Woman as he spoils Valentin with fine cooking and nurses him back to health. Finally, he is Molina the Lover, generous and caring as his relationship with Valentin changes and his courage starts to evolve.

Molina the Prisoner

Having an understanding of what the conditions of Villa Devoto were for prisoners, either of moral or political prosecution, gives me a greater understanding of what these gentlemen went through. I have to understand that the experiences the two men had were much different. Molina, a moral prisoner, wasn't subjected to the same brutality Valentin, the political prisoner, was subjected to. However, the fear of this brutality for Molina was real. Although he had not been subjected to the brutality of the guards, he may very well have been beaten or abused by his fellow prisoners. Furthermore, the reality that he was going to be safe from any torture didn't exist in his mind, because he didn't know what the guards and Warden might do to him. There were no rules in these prisons, and having had watched or heard other prisoners be tortured would have instilled a sense of fear in him as well.

There are only two settings in this play. One is the prison cell. The other is the Warden's office. These are the only two times Molina is seen as a prisoner. The majority of the action takes place in the cell. However, I'd like to start my examination of Molina as a prisoner in the Warden's office. This is where the true behavior of this

particular role demonstrates itself. The encounters with the Warden are written as voice-overs. We are only supposed to hear what happens in this office. For the purposes of our production, we had a live voiceover representing the Warden, and Molina stepped outside the cell to speak to him. This served this particular role in two fashions. First, it gave the Warden a sense of power. Although Molina manipulated the Warden, the Warden had the power in the setting of his office. As the Warden points out, Molina is scared. For me, as the actor, I found the isolation away from my partner to be of particular help in these moments. My first conversation with the Warden didn't come until the end of Act One. To step outside the cell and be separated from Valentin, my acting partner, immediately placed me in a position of vulnerability. It is this vulnerability that fostered itself into the nerves and obedience Molina needed to have in these few brief interactions with the Warden. We, as a cast, also understood the Warden trusts Molina. Therefore, we could determine Molina demonstrated obedience in the prison up to this point.

Molina is more comfortable inside the cell. Although he is still a prisoner inside these walls, he doesn't play the role of the prisoner in here. Inside the small cell walls, he can escape, at least mentally. He is more often seen playing one of his two other roles inside the cell. He is either being the perfect woman or the lover to his cellmate. The reality of the situation, his role as a prisoner, comes to the forefront, as he gets increasingly nervous about the information that might be given to him by his cellmate. His pleas for Valentin to keep all the information to himself reflects the fear Molina has of "the system." Throughout the second act, we see fear of interrogation. This reflects the fear of torture all prisoners of Villa Devoto shared. Molina goes as far as saying, "I'm not good at this sort of thing" (Puig 1373), referring to keeping information safe he

might get from Valentin. This fear comes from his love of Valentin. Not only is Molina afraid the Warden will interrogate him, he fears for the life of his companion in the cell. This fear, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, is apparent in the relationship between the two men from the start. Ignorance truly is bliss in this situation.

My physicality changed in the moments I became the prisoner. As soon as I would step from the cell to talk to the Warden, I would allow less vocal variety to help achieve the sense of control Molina was trying to maintain. I also allowed less physical freedom. The Warden's power over Molina had to remain strong. Thus, my movement was that of a deer in headlights; stilted, nervous, and unmoving. Restricting both my voice and my body helped achieve the sense of anxiety needed for these moments. While inside the cell, I still allowed the anxiety to be there, but with a freer voice and body, the anxiety was less controlled. I did not have to pretend in front of Valentin as much as I did in front of the Warden. Valentin knew exactly how Molina felt about the Warden.

Molina the Woman

Although *Kiss of the Spider Woman*'s climatic moment is the moment when Valentin and Molina share a kiss, their romantic relationship is secondary to the relationship they share as man and "woman." As I have stated before, Molina declares himself to be a woman throughout the show. It is my belief these feelings are valid. Why would the character say them otherwise? What strikes me as an actor as interesting are the views Puig had about these two characters; Valentin: The Man and Molina: The Woman.

"In that cell are only two men, but that's just on the surface. There are really two

men and two women. I agree with Theodor Roszak when he says that the woman most desperately in need of liberation is the woman every man has locked up in the dungeons of his own psyche (Levine 260-261).

Puig sees his characters not as two stereotypical roles but sharing both roles in the cell. Puig's thoughts on the characters and his views of homosexuality echo a sentiment that a person can only be defined as who they are, not who they are sleeping with or what they are eating. In exploring Molina, as a character, I can't strip myself of my manhood. So, I more thoroughly explore his role as the woman.

Norman Lavers, a Puig scholar from Arkansas State University, said in his book, *Pop Culture into Art: The Novels of Manuel Puig*, "Molina represents not only the male's homosexual option but also the role of the oppressed woman who is at one and the same time an 'able manipulator' with even the prison warden" (38). Molina being homosexual is interesting, but more interesting to me as the actor in this production is Molina's role as the "oppressed woman." Puig's upbringing and the machismo culture that prevailed the Argentine country side of his youth furthermore feed into this notion by allowing the female characters "two options: either to be the submissive victims of male dominance or to pretend submission while making calculated use of the system to gain their own ends" (Lavers 38). Molina lives in both of these roles. Furthermore, Molina fulfills both female roles in the two relationships he has with men in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. In his relationships with the Warden and Valentin, Molina is both the "submissive victim" and the "able manipulator."

His relationship with the Warden is more easily dissected. In his first of his three interactions with the Warden, Molina is the submissive woman to the Warden's macho man. In this scene, the final moments of Act One, Molina is seen taking orders from the

Warden with the obedience of a housewife. The “able manipulator” is seen in the interactions between the Warden and Molina in the second act. Here, Molina allows the Warden to believe the Warden is still in control. By allowing the Warden to feel he is still controlling Molina, Molina is able to seize control of the situation. He begins to use the Warden to work against the Warden.

In his relationship with Valentin, Molina starts as the submissive woman, transforms into the manipulator, and then transforms back into the submissive woman. In the opening scenes of Act One, Molina is seen caring for Valentin. He cooks for him, cleans after him, and lulls him to sleep with the story of the movie. He serves as Valentin’s woman. He doesn’t turn into the able manipulator with Valentin until Act One, Scene Three. When the poisoned food enters the cell, Molina does everything in his power to convince Valentin to eat it. When Valentin refuses the food, Molina is forced to eat it. At this point, he is attempting to be the manipulator. Molina very quickly falls out of this role. When he sees the affect the poison has on Valentin’s body, Molina abandons this role and reverts to the submissive once again. This reversal of roles only enhances the affection he holds towards Valentin. Throughout the second act, Molina is the courageous yet submissive woman for Valentin. At this point in the story, Molina is risking his life for Valentin, without Valentin’s knowledge.

There is an interesting internal struggle faced by Molina. He has started by manipulating Valentin and working for the Warden. In the early days of the manipulation of Valentin, Molina encourages him to eat as much as possible. After seeing the aforementioned affects of the poison in the food, his manipulation tactics take a drastic turn. He is now trying to convince Valentin not to eat at all. He wants Valentin

to allow himself to get healthy by not eating. This creates a combination of the two roles in Scene Five of Act One. It is in this scene that Valentin loses control of his bowels and defecates in his pants. Molina is torn between informing Valentin of his manipulation but also compelled to strip and bathe him. Similarly, Molina is stuck telling the Warden he is trying to get information from Valentin, yet insisting that Valentin tell him nothing of his political life. These combinations create the angst within the character and the ultimate suspense of the piece as a whole. The question remains; what is going to happen? Will Molina confide in Valentin? Is Valentin being tricked yet again? Will the Warden find out about the double cross and, if so, what will happen? All these questions are reflected in the portrayal of Molina as one of Puig's women, both the manipulator and submissive female. Ultimately, it is his final act of submission that ends his life, asking Valentin for the list of names to report to the outside.

In order to physically portray the varying roles Molina plays, I had to know what role he was playing with whom and when. Detailing the transitions with my cast mate and director allowed me to understand when I was "playing the game" with Valentin, when I was his true companion, and when I was both. Understanding the difference between the two, I allowed my body freedom as the submissive woman and forced a more rigid nature as the able manipulator. Being more comfortable in the role of submissive woman also allowed for more emotional and vocal freedom. The rigid nature of the manipulator caused both my physicality and vocalizations to be stifled by the constraints of my plan. The moments where the two collide created a varied roller-coaster of physicality, vocalization and emotional life needed to fill the character and to serve both roles.

Molina the Lover

Molina doesn't appear as a lover until the end of the second act. When Molina is seen heartbroken and overburdened by the stress he placed on himself as the "able manipulator," Valentin touches him gently on the chest. This simple act opens the door for Molina to become a lover. The argument could be made that Molina has always loved Valentin. I would agree, but the love isn't realized until the second part of the second act. The unrequited love is never outwardly stated, and it isn't until just before the pair of prisoners make love for the first time that Molina even suggests he has feelings for Valentin. When he does finally propose a romance between the two, he decorates it under the guise of friendship and affection, never outwardly saying he loves Valentin. The unrequited love Molina holds for Valentin is never expressed outright. Even in the final moments the pair spends together, Molina only asks for a kiss. He doesn't say, "I love you." This might seem to express a frigid nature to the character, but I argue it only expresses the frigid nature of the given circumstance. Molina doesn't say he loves Valentin not because he doesn't, but because he doesn't need to. At the end of the play, the pair has become so entangled in one another's lives that their love, or respect, or affection, however it wants to be labeled, is understood. Furthermore, the pair is stuck in a prison. Valentin is straight. Valentin has a girlfriend. Molina understands this is not a place to express passion. The passion is understood.

Molina is a generous lover. However, his generosity is self-serving. Molina feels free of his personal and physical entrapments when he is making love to Valentin. He says he feels free. This escapism is what both characters are seeking. They continually

escape into the world of the film, and when that device no longer is sufficient, either out of boredom or heartbreak, the characters escape through other means. Molina allowing Valentin to “do what you want with me (Molina) because it’s what I (Molina) want” (Puig 1373) is a self-serving offer. As an actor, it is important for me to understand why he wants this. Molina is searching for love. Puig said he believes love, termed as affection, is transcendental. Although sex and love are separate and can exist separately, they don’t here. Molina’s offer of his body to Valentin comes from love. The love is never spoken of, but it is there. Likewise, Valentin’s acceptance of this offer is an offer in and of itself and also comes from an affectionate, loving place. Without the presence of love in these extremely intimate moments, the exchange becomes nothing more than the brutalization of one prisoner by another. It is Molina’s affections towards Valentin that incite him to make the offer.

It is important for me to understand this to drive the plot of the story. As actors, our job is to tell the story. This story is one of unlikely friendship and unexpected affections. Molina the Lover is revealed at just the right time, the climax.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CHARACTER ANALYSIS

“Only a full-knowledge of the before time enables actors to get into the scene with genuine feeling.”
Jean Benedetti

Throughout my education I have been told a character analysis is essential to understanding the character. I have often found myself rushing through these assignments in classes with an emphasis on finishing the assignment. For this project I sat down and analyzed my character thoroughly and answered the following questions. What I found was that certain questions led me to answers that surprised me. You will find various repeating themes, as well as surprisingly long answers to several of the questions. This analysis has taught me that the physical, emotional, and mental characteristics of a character are linked without question. I also have found that trying to separate these three is nearly impossible to do. This discovery leads me to a greater understanding of Molina as a full functioning human being.

Paul Kurit developed a thorough character analysis in his book, *Playing: An Introduction to Acting*. The analysis is found on pages 160-163. This analysis is part of my greater understanding of the character. This is essential to process as an actor. I have answered these questions based on the information given to me by the playwright as well as information I can intelligently estimate based on what the playwright has written. I have answered these questions from the point of view of Molina throughout the play. The questions also are answered in the voice of Molina, trying to channel the voice the playwright has given the character while answering these questions.

Who am I?

I am Luis Alberto Molina. I am in the Villa Devoto prison in Argentina. I am a homosexual window-dresser who has been put away for “gross indecency.” I have been in prison for three years of my eight-year sentence. I lived with my mother in downtown Buenos Aires until I was arrested. I am in love with film and especially with the actress Simone Simon, the star of the films *Cat People* and *Curse of the Cat People*. I am 30 years old.

Who am I named after? Do I like my name?

I am named after my father, Luis, and my uncle, Alberto. Since I had no attachment to either of these men and hold resentment for them, I prefer to go by the only name connected to my mother, who loved and raised me -- Molina, my surname. The guards, the Warden, and my cellmate all call me Molina, never once in the play referring to me by my given name of Luis. My name, when translated from Spanish, means a mill of large capacity. There is pride for me in the name Molina. This pride comes from my mother. I am proud of her, and a part of her, even if it is just a last name it brings me pride. This pride doesn't exist in the either Luis or Alberto.

What is my sex? What do I think of sex?

“I always knew I would never be a famous actress. There it was sticking out in front of me, the one thing that got in my way; my penis,” is the opening line to Rupert Everett's book, *Hello Darling, Are You Working?* (Everett 1). This opening line rings so clearly for me. I am a male by birth. I was born with a penis and testosterone. However, I do not feel male. I “am a woman, 100%” (Puig 1371). The battle I have with my own

gender is one I have had for decades. I understand I am a man, and being a man who is attracted to other men, I know I am a homosexual. However, I don't relate to either men or homosexuals. I understand there are men who are attracted to other men who feel fine dating each other, either one or both of the men acting feminine. I don't. I don't feel fine with dating someone who isn't a true man. I feel "there is someone exciting when a man controls you" (Puig 1373). I both love and hate my gender. I hate I was born male but love males. I hate that because I am male, I will never know the love of a "real" man.

In my culture there is a certain responsibility to being a male. You must have a certain "machismo." I don't have that. I feel more comfortable tending to the needs of another through love and nurturing rather than through providing and building. I am a comforter, as so many of my female role models are. I am not the protector.

What is interesting is that by the end of Act II, I seem to fit both roles. I remain the feminine icon of mother and wife but risk and sacrifice my life to protect and help the man in my life.

How old am I? What do I think of my age?

I am 30 years old. That is old. I am getting to the age where I am no longer young and beautiful, like the film actresses I worship. I am getting to the age where I no longer can be provided for by others and now must take responsibility for myself. When I came into prison, I was still young enough to be living at home. I was still young enough to have the constant support of my mother. Now, just a few years later, I am going to be expected to take care of and support her through her poor health when I return to the outside. This transition is one that has happened in isolation. I have not had

to test this transition on the outside world, and so there is a fear I have of this “new” age I’ve become.

The fear consumes me throughout the play. As I get more and more involved in both the workings of the Warden and his men, as well as the workings of Valentin and his mission, I find myself making wise and risky choices to better the one I have grown to love. These decisions may seem hasty. However, they are the most responsible decisions I have made in my life. I am becoming an adult, slowly, but surely.

How does my posture express my age, health, and inner feeling?

I was born a man, but I feel like a woman. This complexity inside me is reflected throughout my physical being, especially in my posture. In my attempt to remain one of the young ingénues I admire, I find myself curling my shoulders in so I can remain as small as possible. I have broad, masculine shoulders that must be taken in. The length of my spine must be curled over so I am not as tall as the men around me, otherwise how can they feel powerful around me? I pull my elbows as close to my body as possible so I may appear to have a girlish shape. My legs remain crossed or pressed together so I can imitate the shape of the legs of my most valued beauties.

When I get sick, however, I forget this. I am me. The moment the guards poison me and the poison hits my system; I am no longer attempting to maintain any sort of image of beauty. Some of the same posture remains, but the curved spine is no longer a reaction to my height but rather a reaction to my stomach pain. My pressed legs are no longer an attempt at beauty but a way to keep any self-defecation from making a mess. My elbows remain pressed close to my body, but only to massage my aching stomach, not to diminish my size.

How is my complexion? What do I think of it?

Years of living in prison have caused my skin to look less fresh than it has in the past. I have always taken excellent care of my skin, washing my face before bed, keeping moisturizer at close hand, and taking care of any blemishes I may have had as soon as I could. Now, I am in prison. I don't have a mirror. I do not have moisturizer. The only soap I can use is the bar soap provided to me. My skin is dry. There are times I can feel the dry skin on my face. There are times I have eliminated blemishes while lying awake in my cot at night, without a mirror, using only the touch of my fingers to find the sources of the impurity. I do not feel glamorous or pretty anymore, and what's worse; I cannot do anything about it.

What is my height? What do I think of it?

I am tall, very tall by Argentinean standards. The average height in Buenos Aires is 5'8" for men, and I stand 6' tall. This is one more obstacle for me. How can I ever be less than a man if I am taller than most of the men I am around? I hate my height. When I think of myself in my mind's eye, I do not think of myself as tall as I am. I am only confronted with the reality of the situation when I am around other men, and I am looking down to talk to them. As far as I lean back, as much as I physically try to shrink, there is only so much I can do. The perfect woman is one who is smaller than her husband, by at least a couple of inches. I fear I will never be that way. I will never be the pretty, dainty and delicate woman of my dreams. This fear controls my physicality and adds to the loneliness I feel every day. I won't let myself be loved, because I don't fit my own image

of what love should look like. Would this fear still exist if I were smaller? Would a shorter height actually make me more feminine? Would I then fit more into the impossible mold I have built for myself? Or would I still be just as lonely? Would I still be just as sad?

What is my weight? What do I think of it?

I have always been thin. Weight has never been something with which I have struggled. My frame is the most feminine thing about me. I have a penis, so I cannot deny the implications that has against my quest for womanhood. However, my frail frame is something I can control. Being in prison also has greatly affected the weight of my body. I am not allowed to indulge in lavish feasts. Even when my mother brings me food in prison, it is either perishable and needs to be consumed almost immediately because there is no refrigeration, or it is beans that must be boiled and are little better than the food served in Villa Devoto. Right now, at 6' tall, I weigh in at 140 pounds, far under the weight the average 6' tall man weighs.

I am almost never hungry, and I'm always happy to spare what little food I have for Valentin. As the show progresses, towards the middle and end of Act II, I find myself giving almost all of my "mother's" presents to Valentin. At this point, however, I find it is more important for me to help Valentin than to help myself. I find I am more concerned about his well being, about bettering him and his cause, than I am about my concerns and needs. The prison I once hated has become a place of comfort, and as I near the day of my early release, I am left questioning if I want to go. This manifests itself in the form of food. The more tasty the treat, pastry, sweet milk, or fried chicken, the more inclined I find myself to give it all to Valentin.

What is the pitch, volume, tempo, resonance, or quality of my voice? What do I think of it?

In an attempt to achieve my ideal role in the world, I find myself talking in three varied patterns of speech. In life, we often find ourselves in different roles in the varied situations of our lives. Sometimes I am a son, sometimes a lover, sometime a winner, sometimes a loser, sometimes entertainment, and sometimes the child in need of help and support. My roles are as varied in the confines of prison as the roles any other would have to play on the outside. I hurt and need help. I entertain and need an audience. I nurture and love, and I am loved in return. This wide variety of characters that I, Molina, play in this cell is reflected in many of the vocal characteristics I live in. These varieties of vocal patterns are associated with the different roles I play in the prison and with my cellmate. My major roles are the orator of the film, the caregiver, and the true Molina.

As the storyteller, the orator of the film, I am smooth and languid, with a variety of rolling pitches to enthrall my listener. I seduce the listener's ears with sudden stops and heavy breathing. The sounds of my own voice and the story I am painting for my listener have the same affect on me. I get lost in the story and find myself playing to perfection, of course, the role of the beautiful Irina.

As the caregiver I am more relaxed. I tend to sit in a mid-range of my voice, trying not to get too high or too low. I try not to get too loud or too soft. I stay in the comfortable mothering zone in the mid-range of my vocal ladder. I know that to the outside community this range might not be feminine sounding. However, in my head I hear the comforting coo of my mother's voice after I had fallen off my bike. The non-

plosive sounds don't frighten me away. The caress of her soft voice falls into my body, and although is not a replica of the sounds I heard as a child, there is a quality that still reminds. One of comfort, one that you can cry in front of, and a voice that knows what to do in all emergencies, without sounding stressed.

The third voice is that of the true Molina. A voice that becomes clearer as the story progresses. Although I don't get any more masculine as the story moves forward, I get more and more focused on someone else, and thus the roles I should play become less and less thought about. I am no longer concerned that I am looking feminine, and my feminine and soft nature is now simply reality. My voice drops to a lower place, and the tempo becomes a bit faster. I now speak the truth, as I know it, and find myself less concerned with what Valentin or the Warden wants to hear. As I open into what Kristen Linklater would call my "natural voice," the walls, based in roles and women I want to be, come crashing down, and I find myself more vulnerable than ever.

Is my articulation careless or precise? Is my articulation standard or colloquial? Do I have a dialect?

Coming from a place of very low class, my speech and vocal patterns are of the utmost importance to me. The better my speech sounds, the more sophisticated people will think I am. I spend time to make the sounds of the words I want to say. Although I speak a lot, and sometimes for the pure fact that I want to hear myself speak, which annoys Valentin, I speak with dignity. I make the sounds of the words to a point of over articulation. When under high amounts of stress, or when time is of the essence, this quality seems to disappear. When I am leaving Valentin at the end of Act II, I find I am less concerned about how I sound and more concerned about what I am saying. The

same is true for when I am making love to Valentin. I don't have to worry about anything then. It is the single moments in these last months of my life where I don't feel judged. In fact, I don't feel like me. "I feel free" (Puig 1374). Free from everything, including the pressures to usurp my social status as a poor Argentinean faggot with proper vocal use and articulation and free to just be.

What is my hair color and style? Do I like it?

Ohh, my hair. I don't even want to talk about that. I have not been to the salon in years. I am messy and unkempt. I hate it. I have not used a proper shampoo since I've been in prison, and now my hair feels greasy. The light, sun-kissed brown that my hair used to be has faded into a dark and slick mess atop my head. Every once in a while my mother will bring me shampoo from the local drug store, but besides that I am stuck using lather from the bar soap they give us. My scalp is so dry that I've gone to only washing my hair once a week in order to stop the itching. So, I have resorted in my cell to covering my head with a handkerchief in order to hide the travesty that has been created.

Do I have any deformities? What do I think of them?

I do not have any deformities. Unless you think being a homosexual is a deformity. But I most certainly don't. I know what I am, "it's all plain as day to me, so you can spare me your advice" (Puig 1358).

Do I have any mannerisms? What do I think of them?

Most of my mannerisms come from my love for Simone Simon, the screen legend, and my imitations of her work in *Cat People* and *Curse of the Cat People*. She is soft and quiet, the kind of woman men are intrigued by because she is a mystery. The

way she will slowly move her hands up and down to her chest. The quiet way she looks at Oliver as she says good night, slowly putting her eyes to the ground and then reconnecting with her lover the architect. It is these types of actions that I love. I use them in my relationships with men as well. The best thing about these coy movements is they work. Men fall for them.

How energetic or vital am I? Do I like it?

I strive to be the perfect woman. I try to keep my energy at a very calm level. I try to be the supportive housewife at all times. My energy is that of Donna Reed, the happy homemaker, or better yet, my energy is like that of Irina from *Cat People*. I am the scared and nervous new, young wife who has a secret to tell but is afraid. I remain attentive in the manners of the daily business, i.e. cooking, cleaning, making sure Valentin is well fed, but I leave this serene yet productive energy when confronted with danger. My energy then turns into nerves. My energy then turns into the energy of a humming bird. I am more fleeting at this point than stable. I am more likely to snap and lose my temper. Most importantly, I am more able to be myself and reveal the things I don't want to say. I will cry in my nervous energy, where I am more logical in my "housewife" energy. The pressures of prison and my new found love for Valentin force me into an energy level I am not used to living in. This energy level is one that doesn't allow me to play at housewife. It pushes me into a world, an energy, a state of mind, where I can no longer pretend. I have to start facing the world I live in and emotions, true emotions, I may be having. I can no longer follow the script for what I feel might be the right thing to say and now have to say the things I feel.

Are my gestures complete or incomplete, vigorous or weak, compulsive or controlled?

While telling the film, my gestures are complete. I follow through with every gesture to give the grandeur of the film. I commit to the movie both vocally and physically. When talking to Valentin, my gestures become more incomplete, especially when I am talking to myself. My gestures are weak but controlled until I start to get nervous. As my nerves come more to the forefront, I find myself to be more vigorous as the urgency becomes essential to my safety. I, once again, let go of what I am trying to portray and start to actually behave like myself. I let go of the complete and thought out gestures and begin to act more in the moment. My gestures match the situation, I begin to get frantic and my gestures match that energy.

Do I like my walk?

Much like the rest of my physicality, I am always aware of the way I move. When I am in “housewife” mode, I am perfectly happy with the way I walk. I begin to get uneasy with the way I move as the show progresses, and I find myself in situations I have never been in before. These are the moments I am fighting for survival. When these moments begin to happen, towards the end of Act I with the introduction of the espionage, I am uneasy. As I get more and more involved both with the espionage and with Valentin, I find myself to be less and less concerned with the way I walk and more and more comfortable with the new form of walking. Although my walking and movement never become masculine in a John Wayne sense, there is now a sense of purpose to the walk, rather than a sense of show. This sense of purpose might be compared to the sense of purpose Irina has in the film while stalking her prey or towards

the end of the film when she gets more and more frantic and is looking for any kind of salvation.

How do I sit?

When I sit, I am as pretty as a picture. I sit either with my legs crossed like the starlets of today or with my heels pressed together. While sitting on the floor, I often find I lean to one side or another, much like the women I have seen in paintings in the museums of Buenos Aires. I sit attentively and ready to listen to whatever problems Valentin might have. There is a presentational look to the way I sit, as if I were going to be painted by some great artist, or as if I wished to be painted by some great artist. Either way, there is glamour to the way I sit, an elegance that only can be found on the pages of Vogue.

How do I stand?

The way I stand in the play is soft. I am always aware of my height and being aware that my height might make me seem more powerful than I am, I am always trying to get my height lower. I will relax my back so my spine is not straight. I will lean back so I lose a couple of inches that way as well. I will press my shoulders forward in a rounded shape so my shoulders aren't so broad and continually stand like this. It is not, however, a rigid stance. I relax so these shapes are more fluid than they are stiff. I am more like a Jell-O mold of this shape rather than a solid structure. This elasticity gives me a continued soft appearance in the smaller frame I am trying to build for myself.

Do I have any objects with me? How do I handle them?

Throughout the course of this play, I handle many props. I am always cooking, especially making tea, so I find the tea kettle seems to become an extension of my arm.

This is held with the utmost reverence as it symbolizes the one thing I value most in the world, the comfort and care I can give to my great friend, Valentin. These domestic things, the tea kettle, pots, pans, plates, silver, etc, all represent the life I want to live. On the inside I am blessed to have a forced domestic relationship with a man, a real man. This is something I have wanted so badly. So, whether I am cleaning the silver, or I am cooking a meal with the small rations of outside food given to me by the Warden, I handle these objects with the care and respect they have earned from me, and with the hopes this dream I am living inside these prison walls will someday come true for me on the outside.

Is my basic rhythm jerky or smooth, volatile or even-tempered, impulsive or deliberate, ponderous or light, broken or continuous?

Rudolf Laban has developed a system of acting known as eight effort shapes. Laban describes his effort shapes as “a system for understanding the more subtle characteristics about the way a movement is done with respect to inner intention” (Laban 1). For the beginning of the show, Act One, Scenes Two and Three generally stay in the worlds of *float* and *glide*. *Float* is described as indirect movement, with light movements with slow long motions. I use float for the beginning part of the film I am telling. I move towards *glide*, which is described the same as float but the movement is more direct than indirect, when I am talking to Valentin during the first several interactions I have with him. This Laban shape works well for the feminine ideal I would like to be. *Float* and *Glide* are the shapes I strive to be. There is a sense I am putting these effort shapes on. I have a lot of practice in these shapes, so there is not a lot of effort in my shapes. They

come naturally to me now. They are where I like to live as far as what I would like to show the world.

As I start to pry into the life of Valentin, I move from these light and long types of motion into a light, direct and short motion known as *dab*. *Dab* is similar to little pokes at something. This remains delicate and soft, almost playful, as I start to interrogate him about his life.

When I talk about myself, I move into a heavier sense of body weight. I am no longer, as Laban would say, gliding or floating, but I've moved into *press*. Direct motion, heavier weight, long continuous movements are now the characteristics that would describe my energy. This comes around when I talk about how I've hurt my mother and how ashamed I am of that. This also is around when I talk about the scary and darker moments of the film. Moments like Irina stalking the architect girl call for more weight than the light and airy movements of the love affair.

As I talk to the Warden, I move from *Dab*, *Float*, *Glide* or *Press* into a *Flick*. *Flick* is much like *Dab*, but instead of being direct, it is rather indirect. My fear of the Warden and the situation I have gotten myself into allows me to easily move from *Dab*, more direct, to diverting my attention with *Flick*. This also allows me not to have to look him in the eyes at all.

Towards the end of Act II when I am trying to get away from Valentin and the information he might tell me, I move into *Punch*, again like *Dab*, but with more force. This is heavier than *Dab* and allows me to let Valentin know I am serious when I say I cannot listen to what he says. In these moments, I am moving from *Punch* during the moments he is trying to tell me information, and *Glide* as we take our relationship into a

more physical relationship. I like our relationship and am more than comfortable when he is taking me into his arms. When I move to the end of the show where I am desperately trying to move out of the cell, I illustrate this mix the most. When I am going from trying to help my friend and trying to say good-bye at the same time.

A dancer by the name of Gabrielle Roth developed another system of stage movement based on the movements of children. She took the movements of children on the playground she observed and broke them into five different movements known as *flowing*, *staccato*, *chaos*, *lyrical* and *stillness*. She described these qualities in the online magazine *Living Well* as the following:

Flowing is stretching, undulating, and moving in circling waves. Then the music changes into staccato. Staccato is sharp and explosive, moving in lines and angles, with short percussive movements. Then comes chaos. Chaos takes everything to extremes, letting our controlling mind go and letting the body loose. Afterwards, almost as a relief, comes lyrical. Lyrical is light, joyful, and airy, it is a moving of serene joy and celebration. Last comes stillness. Stillness is the slow winding down, the grounding. Every move is done in slow motion with pauses and restarts (1).

These rhythms “make up the whole of our experience and are reflected in each of our actions and emotions” (1). My rhythms are varied throughout the show. There is a distinct difference between my rhythms in Act I and Act II. In Act I, I live in the worlds of *Flowing* and *Staccato*. *Flowing* reflects the delicate essence of the feminine being I am trying to be. *Staccato* is more reflective in the moments of intensity trying to convince Valentin to eat. They are also reflected in the more suspenseful moments in the film.

Towards the end of the show I find myself in *Chaos* and *Stillness*. *Stillness* appears in the comfort I have found with Valentin in our relationship. *Chaos* appears in

the moments where I have to make the choices to support or not support Valentin. The only of the five scared rhythms I stay away from is *Lyrical*.

What do I like to wear? How do I wear my clothes? How do I handle them?

I am forced to wear the uniform of the prison. We are provided with a pair of navy blue slacks and a grey t-shirt. I hate these clothes. They are everything I hate about men. There is no hiding the fact I am a man in these clothes. There is no way to pretend to be a woman wearing these clothes. I can't deny the clothes they give us here in prison aren't comfortable; they just aren't what I would choose to wear. They are polyester, and I am used to silk.

Do I carry accessories or hand props?

The props I carry are mostly of the domestic nature. Pots, pans, a kettle, silverware, and a rag to clean things with often are what I am holding. This symbolizes my eternal quest to be a domestic goddess. Without these things I feel like I can't offer anything to the cell. I need these things to feel important, and in many ways these are the things that help me get through each day.

What do I do when I wake up each morning?

Waking in the morning in Act I is very different from the way I wake up in the morning in Act II. In Act I, I am still getting used to the fact I am sharing this cell. With my cellmate sick through a large portion of the act, I find myself fixated on the routine I have developed for myself before he came into the cell -- cleaning the floors, dusting the shelves and things of that nature. During Act II, I have a stronger investment in my relationship with Valentin due to the risks I am taking for him and the physical relationship we have started. I begin to wake up in the morning and watch him sleep. He

has become my everything, even if I can't say that to him, and because of this, I find I want to observe his every move and be with him whenever I can. My routine has suddenly taken a less important place in my life.

What is my relationship to my environment? Do I like it?

I am comfortable in my environment when I am alone or with Valentin. I have lived long enough in the prison to know that as long as the guards are away from me, then there is nothing that can be done to me. I am safe when I am with Valentin. I also know that as long as he is here and he is well, he will protect me, because despite what he says, I know he loves me. When the guards come around, I get more guarded. I don't know what they are going to do. Although they have never done anything to me, I feel like they will do something if even slightly provoked. I have seen it happen before. On the same note, I am not comfortable when I am called to talk to the Warden. He scares me even more than the guards do. He is a large, scary man, and he has the power to have me killed if he so pleased. When I am talking to him, I have to understand what he says goes.

Although I am getting more comfortable with my surroundings, I don't like these surroundings. I want to be free. I want to be with my friends and mother on the outside. There is nothing I wouldn't do to get out and no one I wouldn't betray to get to the outside again. I hate these walls that the guards, the government, and the dictatorship are holding me behind and want nothing more than to walk down the street a free man.

What is my educational background? How much discipline was I subjected to? How intelligent am I?

I barely made it through high school. I am not very intelligent in the sense that I don't have very many book smarts. I am, however, very intuitive. I have spent many years on the outside fairly quiet amongst my group of troubled friends and even quieter in the early years of my sentence observing the men who came into these walls. I know a lot about human behavior and am proud to say I have learned a lot about how to take care and nurture people behind these walls. I know when they have had an enough, and I know when to push on even when they say they have had enough. Although I am not very well read, I know a lot about movies. There isn't a popular film of recent years that I couldn't tell you almost everything about. I love this knowledge I have, and it's this knowledge that lets me forget sometimes I am stuck in prison. My knowledge of these movies lets me escape, if just for a few minutes, from behind these walls.

What was my childhood like? What are my strongest memories?

My childhood was less than glamorous. My mother and I struggled. She did the best she could to buy me the things I needed but that was all I received. I was never given lavish birthday parties; the small cake I had at my home was enough for me. I didn't realize we had less until I started school. Once I got into the public school system, I began to notice that other students had more than one pair of slacks. I noticed they had clean hair almost everyday of the week. I noticed that while my shoes were ripped and dirty, my friends had new pairs of shoes to start the school year.

As I grew older, I began to resent my mother for not having the money to pay for the things I thought I needed to have. I didn't understand she was working so hard for

me. I was in high school. I was jealous of my classmates. I was angry I didn't get to live the life my friends were living.

When I finished high school and started to work full time, I realized just how much my mother was working and how hard she was working. I wanted so badly to move out, but I couldn't afford it. My mother never hesitated to let me stay as long as I needed. We began to grow closer over these years. As I worked and was contributing to the household income, my mother had to work less and less. I felt good that I could spend time with her. I loved the fact that we could take Wednesday nights to go see the double feature. We would take walks at night just before bed. We would window-shop, watch happy couples at cafés, and talk and laugh.

My happiest memories of my childhood are when my mother would take me to work with her when she was working nights at the movie theater. I saw so many movies during that time of my life. I loved to watch movies. I could let my imagination go wild, and it was there I could forget about the fact that we were poor. As I got older, I would use movies to get away from the fact that I was ashamed of whom I was growing into. It is these movies that still get me through the fact I am stuck in prison. These memories are what I have used to get me through what has been the worst period of my life. I can't thank my mother enough for that.

How much money do I have? How much do I want?

I am poor. My mother and I have very little money. We have worked hard at low paying jobs only to live in a small, one-bedroom apartment in downtown Buenos Aires. I am happy with my mother, but I wish our hard work could us move out of the apartment and into a small house. We don't starve, but there are a lot of things I want that I can't

afford. I wish I had a lot more money. If I had more money, perhaps I could have afforded to move my mother and me to a country with more opportunities. I wish I had enough money so my mother wouldn't have to work. I wish I could pay her back for everything she's given me. I wish I could buy her a car. I wish I could buy us a new stove. I wish we were more comfortable; rather I wish she were more comfortable.

What is my nationality? What do I think of it?

I am Argentinean. I love my heritage. I am proud of where I have come from, but I am concerned about the future of my country. I hate the dictatorship we are under right now. I don't understand the politics of it all, but I know there are people who are disappearing in the streets everyday and no one knows where they are going. I know now where they are. They are all in the Villa Devoto prison being held without charges and being tortured everyday. The things the Peronist government is doing are betrayals of humanity, and it makes me sick that I live in a country that would allow this. The Argentineans used to be a proud people, and now we are poor and have very little to have pride in.

What is my occupation? Do I like it? What other jobs have I had? When and why did I choose this one?

I am a window dresser at Montoya's, an upscale department store in the center of Buenos Aires. This is the first job I had after high school, and it is the only real job I have ever had. I love it. It lets me do what I do best -- make things look pretty.

What are my political attitudes?

I don't understand politics. I know I am in prison because the Peron Regime finds the practice of homosexuality to be immoral. That is about as far as I go. I have never

had to support myself financially, and so concerns about money and politics weren't of great concern until I moved into prison. I now understand that people are dying for what they believe in and who they are, and that is wrong, but I don't understand or even have a clue about how anyone thinks things are going to change underneath this government.

I don't understand Valentin and why he thinks the ways he thinks. I applaud him for his sacrifice and his bravery, but why? Why does he give up those he loves to fight the cause? Why is he okay with going to jail for political reasons? I am not okay with going to jail for my sexuality, but that being said; I also understand there is nothing we can do to fight against this, especially behind bars.

Am I religious?

I am not very religious. I do believe in heaven and hell and all that stuff, but I am not a practicing Catholic, as many of my countrymen are. I am trying to be a good person so I will go to heaven, and because I feel my mother would like to think I am going to heaven as well. While in prison, I have found the occasion where I felt I needed to pray, but these occasions were often clouded by the sounds of gunfire and feelings of despair on my part. I want to get into Heaven, I really do, I just am nervous that because I am gay, I won't be seen fit to get in. I know a lot of other homosexuals in Argentina are against the church because it has only served as a tool for oppression. I feel church is a tool for oppression, not God.

Who would I choose to be if I could be anyone else?

If I could be anyone else in the world, I would be Irina from *Cat People*. To live that life of such adventure would be nothing but a thrill for me. To move from Eastern Europe to America all by myself would be thrilling. I would adore meeting a handsome

stranger in the park while I was drawing a picture of a cat and tell him of my life and my village back home. I long for the day when I meet a man who wants to marry me and love me forever. I hope to have the strength she has when she finds out he is in love with someone else. I wish to have the courage to track her down and let her know it is not all right. The suspense of having a secret you cannot share with anyone else is titillating to me. The fear of turning into a panther upon a kiss on the lips is thrilling to me. This life is one I want. Or a least I will want until, as adults do, we realize the drama of Hollywood is better saved for the screen. All I really want is someone to care for me. I realize at the end of the play that all I want is for someone to know I am here and care I am here. I realize I can live my life to the fullest and don't need to live my life through the fantasy of someone else's screenplay anymore.

Did I have any childhood heroes? What did I like about them?

My hero growing up was my Mother. She gave me everything. She is simply a saint on earth, and there is no one else I know worthy of the praise I give her. I only wish I could leave these prison walls and be with her once again.

And, of course, Simone. Simone Simon is my other hero. The woman of all women -- beautiful, seductive, soft -- Simone is my ideal where my mother is my reality.

Do I like members of the opposite sex? What do I like about them?

I adore women. They are God's perfect creation. If there is one thing close to perfection in this world, it is woman. The screen icons I have grown to love are the inspiration to get me through my term in prison. I think about the films they have made to get me through my days. There are a number of screen sirens I love, but no one above Simone Simon. She made the movie that let me know it is okay to be different. Her film

Cat People let me know that as different as I may feel, there are others out there who feel different as well. *Cat People* is when I first fell in love. When I saw Simone Simon on screen I had someone other than my mother to idolize.

Do I like my family? What do I like? What do I dislike about them?

My mother is my only family, and I have nothing but the greatest respect for her. She is the rock who raised me, and there is not one thing I dislike about her or about the many years we spent together in our small apartment together. We have many had many laughs in that small apartment and have become the best friends in the world. She is the most important person to me in the world.

How has my mother influenced me? How has my father influenced me?

My mother has been the person I have known as a family. She is the only family I have. My father left us when she found out she was pregnant with me, so when I was born, I was a bastard. She dedicated her life to keep me healthy and as happy as she possibly could. As a child, I would go with her to work all day — she was a secretary by day — and all night four nights a week when she worked as an usher at the local Cineplex. That is where I first started to see movies with Simone Simon in them. I would see all the movies Simone ever made, but none of the movies she made really hit a chord with me until I saw the movie *Cat People*. She played a woman I could finally relate to. My mother knew I loved this movie, and even on her nights off took me back to the movie theater so I could see the movie again. We shared everything together. I would watch as she tried to date men only to find them not qualified to be a parent to me.

I never knew a father. There was never a presence of a father in my life. I knew that some of my friends had fathers, but the friends I had were never around long. Their

parents would find out I was a bastard and tell their children not to hang around me. So, I was left with my mother. It was literally her and me against the world.

As I grew up and made my way through high school, I began to realize I wasn't like the other boys in my grade. I knew I liked other boys. I am sure my mother knew I was different, but she never brought it up with me or discussed it with me. She only loved me. My mother was always showing nothing but unconditional love. When the boys at school would beat me, she would nurse my wounds. When the neighbors used to laugh at me and talk behind my back, she never said anything but would tell them to mind their own business.

My mother is the only woman I rank higher than Simone Simon. When I think of the woman I would like to be, my mother is the type of woman I could only strive to be. Her compassion for other human beings, especially me, is what I find the most feminine about her. This quality is something she has instilled in me, and something I have been able to hold on to even in an environment as hostile as prison. I have this compassion and carry it to Valentin.

I am only sorry my mother had to find out I was gay by my arrest. She has literally worked herself into severe health problems, and now the added stress of a son who is not only gay but in prison because he is gay is something I fear is going to kill her. I feel the weight of her impending death upon my shoulders as well. The shame I have brought this woman is unbearable when she has done nothing but support me and love me. This shame is unforgivable and only adds to the plight in which I find myself. Having shamed my family and now betraying my Valentin, I am about to crack under the pressure.

What was my favorite fairy tale?

My favorite fairy tale is *Cinderella*, because just like her, I feel I have a beautiful princess locked inside me, and with the right shoe, I know some handsome man will find me and take me to live in his palace with him until the end of our days. She was poor and I was poor. Just like her, I will rise from my station in life and become the queen I should become.

Who are my friends? Who are my enemies?

I don't have many friends, but I don't have many enemies either. My friends are those people on the outside. The group of men I would go to cafés with and have coffee and talk about the latest films. My best friend in the world is my mother, and she is the one person on the outside I truly miss. My friends on the outside never got too close because we understood that getting too close could hurt us. This also is the same reason I never let myself get close to men, straight or gay, because if I did, there would be the possibility I would get hurt. By the end of the play, the sole person who knows the most about me is Valentin. He has become my best friend, my lover, my hero, and everything important to me. I realize a life without him is a life I don't want to live and tell him I don't even want to get out of prison anymore just so I could stay with him on the inside.

The one enemy I have is the Warden, if you can call him that. I don't mean the Warden himself, but what the Warden represents. I am an enemy of the system. I am an enemy of the Peron dictatorship that has sent me to jail. I am an enemy of the government that has locked away Valentin and kept him from his political ideals and now has started to poison him. These are my enemies, the ideals that got Valentin and me locked away. I am only doing my best to fight them.

What hobbies or interests do I have?

I have developed two sets of hobbies and interests because of my situation. The first set was developed over the many years I spent on the outside. I had 27 years of freedom before I went into prison. The second set was developed in the last three years, the years I have spent behind bars.

On the outside I liked to go to the movies. I would spend several nights a week at the old cinema house watching double features, often with my mother. We had a weekly date to see the double feature on Wednesday nights. I also loved to decorate. I had our tiny flat decorated in the classic fin de Cecil décor. Everything in our home had come from an antique shop here or a flea market there. And, of course, I loved to go to the café with my friends and gossip about the men who would walk by -- whom we would sleep with, whom we would not, what we thought of them and what we hoped they thought of us.

In prison I have developed a method of keeping busy through a series of chores. I keep busy by cleaning the cell. Every morning I make sure to make my bed. I do every dish that might be lying around. I attempt to sweep and keep my floor clean. Whenever I get a magazine, I tear through it to see what's happening on the outside. These are things I like to do on the inside. This is what keeps me occupied while on the inside. But, alas, I do miss the outside. I miss my friends, the screaming queens, and miss my mother and the Wednesday double features most of all.

Do I have children? Why or why not?

No, I don't have any children. I am a homosexual, and therefore cannot have children. More importantly I have never been in love, and therefore have never even thought about having children.

What will be carved on my tombstone?

"All we flawed women come to a sad ending" (Puig 1374).

Where have I been prior to each of my stage entrances? How does this affect my actions verbally and physically? What would I like to see or do when I enter?

I have been in prison in the beginning of the show. I have been alone in the cell for two weeks now. I am alone and comfortable in my solitude at this point. I am scared when I first see Valentin, because he had been beaten so violently. I am curious about my new cellmate. I want to know who he is and what he is all about. This puts me on guard physically. I am nervous to let him know who I am. I keep myself shut off and sheltered from letting him know whom I am. I put on the air of a great orator. I start by simply telling the story. I won't verbally or physically let him know anything about me. I have learned over the years that it is wisest not to let my cellmates know who I am. I put on the act of the great leading lady right from the start. The only thing I can let him see is the act of the woman. I can't let him see who I am, because I need to survive. I need to survive for four more years.

The next time I come back into the cell is just before the beginning of Act I, Scene IV. I have just come back into the cell from talking to the Warden. I have started to work for the Warden. I am more guarded now because my secrets have just been increased. This new deal I have made with the Warden causes my sense of calm and ease

to disappear. I start to refuse to eat the larger amounts of food, not because I want Valentin to eat the larger portion, but because I know there is poison in the larger portion. Knowing Valentin can't trust me gives me not only a sense of guilt for betraying my cell mate, but also a fear that perhaps I can't trust him either. There is suddenly a more tentative quality in my movements. My voice tries to remain in the same place it has been, but alas the pressures of the spying cause my voice to be less rooted in my chest and more nervous and shaky as well. I don't like this new feeling. I don't like what I am doing. There is added shame in knowing I am now working for those I should be fighting against. I am working for the people who arrested me for being gay, and this shames me. This shame and these nerves work themselves into my body and reflect in my drastically less confident personality and suddenly sheepish behavior.

The next time I come back into the cell is at the beginning of Act II. The nerves remain but for drastically different reasons. I am no longer fearful of what I am doing to Valentin; I am now nervous the Warden will catch wise that I am helping Valentin and not him. My goal is to get this food into Valentin's system so I can cure him of the poison he has been given by the guards. Not letting Valentin know that I know the guards are poisoning him adds to the tension of the following moments. This is my ultimate performance. I need to appear to be just offering things without being too forceful to Valentin. In front of the guards and the Warden, I need to appear to be as ignorant as possible to anything Valentin is doing. This causes too very different vocal ranges and physicality. For Valentin, I remain the constant caregiver, prepping the food and keeping busy to keep him fed and keep my mind off the mess I am making of my

life. For the guards, a nervous and frightened Molina must always be present so no one is the wiser about my condition.

I leave and return to the cell next in Act II, Scene II. When I return, there is more hanging on my shoulders than ever. I am slow and sad. I have just gotten into a fight with Valentin and pushed him over the edge and have also just made a deal with the devil (the Warden) to get myself out of the prison. I fear what will happen to Valentin once I leave but know I must get out as well. I know I will refuse to hear any of his political business to keep not only him safe but also myself safe as well. My fear and anxieties have taken a toll on my ability to play this role of perfect woman. I am Molina at this point and end up looser and more vulnerable than ever. My voice has dropped, my arms are free and loose and shoulders and head are heavy with the pressures of the things I am doing not only to Valentin, but to myself, because I am going to lose the best friend I have ever had.

The final time I return to the cell is to pack my bags for my release. I have fallen for Valentin at this point, and we have been physically intimate. I don't want to lose him, but I know I can't help him. I am both heavy and frantic. I must get out quickly, but I don't want to lose the last moments to be close to my lover. In these last moments of chaos, a situation I don't much like to live in, I find myself both drawn to tell Valentin that I love him and run from him as fast as I can. This tug of war of emotions becomes clear in my physicality as I am torn around the room.

What choices do I face?

I face choices throughout the play. The hardest choice for me to make is the one made in the final moments of the script. Do I want to risk everything for the love of this

man? I know that in making the choice to go into the outside world and use my freedom to make phone calls for Valentin I am at the very least setting myself up for the loss of my own freedom once again. The worst would be my death. As I explain to Valentin, I want to do things to better our friendship because I respect him, and even though I don't understand the cause he is fighting for, I know he has sacrificed almost all of himself for it, and that makes me respect him even more. He is selfless. This selflessness is what inspires me to do something with my life.

In respect to my relationship with the Warden, I face a lot of choices as well. I know certain information the Warden is waiting to hear, and I know this information will only make Valentin's life harder. When I go to the Warden, especially in Act II, there is a choice that has to be made. Will I tell him everything he wants to hear about Valentin, or will I go on pretending not to know anything so I can continue to nurse Valentin back to health with the food the Warden is providing me?

The choice to help the Warden is one I make outside the confines of the play. I don't ever make the choice on stage, but at some point, since Valentin was thrown into my cell, I have decided I will have a benefit from helping the Warden, one that is great enough to risk my safety with my cellmate. The choice to do this comes from fear. I am afraid of those men in charge of me and will do anything to keep them happy. I have seen the brutality they can inflict and certainly have no desire to have that pain inflicted on me. My choice is clear. It is, in the beginning, survival of the fittest; kill or be killed. I choose life.

What choices do I make?

In the end, I make a lot of choices. I decide to follow my heart and make the phone calls Valentin asks me to make, even though I know there is a very large chance I will be killed when doing so. I make the choice to turn on the Warden and help Valentin get better despite the fact I am supposed to be getting information for the Warden and not just helping Valentin. But above all else, I make a choice. I make a choice for myself to do something with my life that I want to do. Yes, it is ultimately for someone else. However, it is the first time I make this choice because I want to. I don't want Valentin's kiss in the end of the play. I take it when he offers it, but what I want is to help Valentin. So, instead of saying I will do this for you because I love you, I do it for me because I love him. I don't make that choice easily, but it's the first time I can do something that feels important on a level more than keeping someone content. This is the choice I make, and it's this choice that ultimately takes my life.

CHAPTER FIVE: REHEARSAL JOURNAL

*“Yank the thread and if you get it in a knot you’ll fail needle work.”
-Molina*

What follows is my rehearsal journal. For the purposes of this process, I have written and recorded my thoughts without editing over the month-long rehearsal and performance process. I have made some edits to clarify what I was thinking at the time, but edits were only made when my thoughts were not clear to an outside reader. What you will find is this journal serves as a reflection of my process. This will illustrate what worked for me and my cast mate and is only the findings we, as two particular actors, found and is not meant to be a device to detour any other actor from choices that didn’t work for us.

02-19-08

Today was the first day we met to rehearse. We started the rehearsal with a read through. As an actor, I value the honesty of moments more than anything else. So for our first read through, we decided to take our time and try to find the moments of truth from the beginning. J.J. Ruscella, an acting professor of mine at UCF, instilled in me a thirst for the truth. I am taking a page from his book for the first few rehearsals. Brittney Rentschler, our director, seems to have similar interests and aesthetics in her style of acting. We both agreed the honesty of the piece is the most important.

As we read the script, Ryan Garcia, who is playing Valentin, and I took the time we needed to lift the words from the page and deliver them to each other. This helped a lot. I feel really good about the casting after this rehearsal. Ryan and I seem to have a

connection. It helps us being friends, but there is ease between us as far as connecting as actors is concerned. From the start we seem to be able to deliver the lines to one another with none of the fear that sometimes accompanies actors, including myself. What is nice about using Ryan is we don't have to spend a lot of time on trust. We already know we can trust each other, and in a show like this, there is no room for distrust. There are so many moments between Valentin and Molina that are completely stripped of any protection, literally stripped in some moments, if we had any hesitations, if there was any chance we couldn't go to "those places," then we would be in trouble. I am confident the friendship we have will only serve the piece, especially as Molina and Valentin start to form their mutual respect for one another.

After the read through, we started to talk about themes. I already was aware there were themes of gender and sexual identity. What were interesting to me were the themes the others noticed. One of the themes Brittney noticed right away is the fact that half the time Molina is escaping into a dream world in the form of a film. She asked me how much I thought Molina would linger in that dream world even when not talking about the movie. When I am preparing meals, for example, am I re-enacting a moment from a movie I've seen? When Molina is having the picnic with Valentin, again, another re-enactment, or is that the reality of the situation? How much does Molina push to have his life reflect the lives of the women he's seen on screen, and when he stops pushing the situation into something perfect, what is it that makes him wake from his dream? This is something for us to think about. When do I let the walls break down, in the form of an ideal film life, and why.

02-20-08

Today we had our first blocking rehearsal. We are going to be on a tight schedule because Brittney and Ryan are both working on *Machinal*, another show at UCF, right now. So, we are going to work the show for blocking very quickly so we have a rough sketch of what the show will look like and then go through and re-work the things we need to work on more. Today we were scheduled to work on Act One, Scene One but with the time we had, we decided to forge ahead. I'm working this process from a very organic point of view. I have decided to use Brittney more as a guide to let us know what is working and let us know what is not clear. She is also there to look at sight lines; because one of the challenges about the black box space we are using is that we have audience all around us, except for directly behind us. Furthermore, she is there to shape what comes from Ryan and me, as Valentin and Molina, into something that continues to tell the story. What I mean by this is that she is there to make sure we are not just serving ourselves through the acting moments, but we are using these moments to continue the story. For me, as an actor, a challenge I have is I can become very internalized. I realize this. As a person, and I believe it is impossible to separate the actor from the human, I am very private. I am very friendly but a very private person as far as what I am feeling. As an actor, this can sometimes creep in, too. I have to constantly remind myself to remain open. Brittney is here to remind me of that. To keep mulling over the same moments to find the honesty and to steer the play to a place where the honesty is reactive to what my partner, Ryan, is doing.

As far as tonight's rehearsal, we started our blocking from the top of the show. There was a lot of discussion about what to do on the opening scene. It is a rather long monologue delivered by Molina. He is telling the story. It is my instinct to stay in the bed for the entire scene; Brittney was not sure at first if that was the right choice. We tried it several ways. First we tried having both of us on our own beds. This felt the most comfortable to me, kept me at a distance from Valentin, a place where intellectually I know Molina would want to stay. We tried it once with me crossing to his bed and telling part of the story from his bed as well as mine. It just felt invasive. Ryan actually stopped us in the middle of that run and said it didn't feel quite right. We then started with me in the corner over by the "window" area we created. Again, this felt forced. I brought up the point that these stories start in the script as a device for Molina to get Valentin to fall asleep, and thus it would make the most sense from my point of view to remain in the bed. We agreed to that and moved on to Scene Two.

The second scene in the show is much more active than the first. We find ourselves actually debating and conversing. The blocking seemed to come more naturally to me for this scene, bringing me down and out of the bed. We start to see the dynamic of the two characters in this sequence. Something for me to think about as I move forward in this process is what issues the film I am talking about brings up. For example, I talk about the architect's mother -- what does that do to me knowing that I, Molina, have a certain relationship with my mother?

02-26-08

Due to the fact that we have a limited time to get things underway as far as getting a full picture of how the show will look, we are moving now at a much faster pace as far

as blocking is concerned. While we took our time with the first two scenes, we are moving now at a much faster pace to get the show on its feet. Tonight we worked through the rest of Act One. There were numerous challenges to the blocking for the remainder of the act. First and foremost, the challenges of the scene in which Valentin defecates in his pants. There was much discussion about the angles we would have to use in order to keep things hidden. But the larger challenges are the emotional tugs the rest of the act provides. Last week we worked heavily on the exposition of the show. I don't mean to diminish the work we did or the scenes that Puig wrote for the opening of the show, but as far as acting is concerned, Molina moves into thicker emotional turmoil once the story picks up and the web he gets tangled into gets thicker.

We are working, as we block, with an image of opening and closing doors. When do I, Molina, open a door for Valentin and what does he, or I for that matter, do with the door once I open it? What I mean by this is our "doors" emotionally, and how does that affect the physicality of the blocking? We started our rehearsal and the discovery of this image with the end of Act One, Scene Two when I encourage him to talk about his girlfriend, telling him to "yank the thread" (Puig 1358). This is an open door, and he shuts the door almost as soon as I open it. I open another door that he keeps open when I ask if Valentin believes in heaven and hell. This door stays open. What this image has done for me as an actor is helped me know when I move in and out physically. The tug of war of the characters is being displayed really nicely with this new image. A new challenge is how far do we move through the doors. Do we move all the way through? Do I just stand in the doorway, or do I close the door? The list of questions this opened is wonderful. Brittney has encouraged me to think about these questions. As we block,

there has to be an awareness of how close we are getting and especially how much we touch.

The first time we touch is also important. It is layered on many levels I have not even begun to explore. I am cleaning him after he has defecated his pants, but the reason he has defecated himself is because of me. Talk about doors opening and closing. Which doors am I opening at this point and to whom? Am I with the warden at this point, and when do I decide to turn on the warden? These are things I haven't even begun to think about. I need to know when I decided to turn on the warden, and this is also something I need to talk to the rest of the group about.

02-27-08

Tonight we worked through the entire second act. Again, we are under a time constraint. I am nervous about having something to work with the entire show. Being there are only two actors in the show, the pace can be determined by the two of us alone. The second act of the show is much more about the relationship between the two of them. We got through the blocking, but as I started out this process trying to find organic blocking, it seems we are rushing just a bit. Mostly my fault for having put on the pressure to get the show blocked. The moments in Act Two, Scene Two where I begin to unravel just a bit are going to take much more work than we are giving them now. The text is so rich that there is emotional life behind the line already, but there is much more there.

There is a danger to loving the text. Brittney has put into my mind that I can't let myself linger too long on the text. I have to work through my script by myself and find the actions I want to apply to the text. One of the best tools I've used in the past is

something called the *Actions: the Actor's Thesaurus*. This book is a list of actions that can be applied to lines. I need to figure out what I am trying to do to Valentin in some of these longer passages that seem to be more emotional. Right now, “Don’t get me wrong, but if I’m nice to you, well, it’s because I want you to be my friend... and why not admit it?” (Puig 1370) is a section of the text giving me trouble. There is again that nagging challenge of not falling in love with the text so much that I don’t serve the piece and begin using the scene as an emotional exercise. This seems like something basic, but it is a problem I am struggling with in this early stage.

The major “technical” issue we had this evening was how to tastefully stage the scene where the characters have sex. I think we have done it with tact, but the problem I am having with the scene as it stands right now is finding the balance between what needs or wants to be said by the playwright to follow the story, the need for verisimilitude for the reality of the world and of what is happening on stage, and something that isn’t placed into the play merely to shock the audience. In the development of the story, the scene in which the two characters make love marks a new point in their relationship and a huge turning point for both the characters, especially Molina. There is nothing of the story that says the scene either can be cut or is placed in the text for the mere fact of having two men engage in intercourse on stage. The reality is the playwright condensed the scene for brevity of the show and to illustrate the compassion that has grown between the two men. The responsibility of the actors is to find that balance we haven’t quite found yet due to the speed of our blocking process.

02-28-08

Tonight we had our first stumble through. That it was -- a stumble through. We had worked so fast on the blocking; it was a matter of remembering what we had done and why we had done that. The motivations seemed to be clear when we were first blocking the piece, but now at a quicker pace and utilizing the entire script and feeling the blocking as a whole, it felt static. There are a couple of things working against us right now. One is that Ryan and I are both so heavily attached to the page at this point. I know we just started to work on the piece and he is involved with another show at the same time right now, but we are both still using the text so much as a crutch that we can't find any of the moments we had when first blocking or even during the read through. We stopped and started a lot tonight, just to get pacing down. This helped us a lot. We could ask questions of one another and see where the other person was coming from, and Brittney also had the opportunity to see what we were thinking as well. What I love about questions is that it seems to open doors to so many more possibilities. One of the things Ryan and I are looking at, and a lot of the questions we asked one another, was about the connection between the story I am telling, the film, and why that may incite the questions we ask one another. This is helping me round out the character as a whole. For example, why do I ask about his girlfriend after I talk about the architect girl? I know intellectually it's because she reminds him of his girlfriend, and so I'm curious to know whom she reminds him of, but the stop-and-start, question-and-answer session allowed us to ask these questions of one another.

In the second scene of the second act, Valentin and Molina have a fight over the fact that Molina is "smothering" Valentin. Perhaps our biggest stop and start of the night was the deconstruction of this moment. Why does Valentin get so mad, and what is it

that Molina is doing that pushes him over the edge? We ended up tracing the problem all the way back to the very top of the scene when I start to tease Valentin about the erection he has when he wakes up. There is this fine line in relationships; I have found, between certain heterosexual men and certain homosexual men and between some of my friends who are heterosexual and me -- there is an unspoken rule that we don't talk about the penis. It is too close to what we might be thinking about. Whether or not there is a curiosity about each other's penis, there is an implication I might be curious about what their penis looks like, or worse that I might be sexually attracted to them. I discussed this with Ryan. He said there are homosexuals he doesn't want discussing that part of his body. Knowing this, we look further at the relationship between Molina and Valentin in this particular moment. The difference between the relationships Ryan has with people who identify differently in sexual preference, and Molina and Valentin, who identify differently in their sexual preference, is that Molina and Valentin are alone in jail together. Is Valentin curious after all the months they have spent together? At this point in the script they have gotten extremely close. Valentin and Molina are both men, and where Molina might be more open about his desires for Valentin, Valentin has developed a closeness with this gay man he cannot deny. Does he get angry because Molina brings it up, or is it because it might be true?

One last thing I want to discuss about today is the fact that I haven't done as much physical work with the softer side of Molina as I would like to. I have received from Netflix the movie *Cat People* that Molina talks about in the play; I just have not watched it yet. I need to. In order to play this character, I need to understand what he is so obsessed with. My homework for tomorrow is to watch the film and bring in some ideas

to play with. We also have set a strict date to be off book by this Sunday, which will be tough, but that gives us time to play with the moments that are not working quite so well right now.

02-29-08

Tonight I came in more prepared than I feel I have for any other rehearsal. I did go home last night and watched the movie *Cat People*. I brought in the movie for today's rehearsal and shared with Ryan and Brittney some of the things I discovered both about the story and Molina. The most obvious thing I discovered is how true Puig is to the details of the plot. The way Molina describes the story is exact, but for a few moments that are left out of the play. I couldn't believe it as I watched the picture. It was unreal how well he described the scenes and what she was wearing and the looks on the characters' faces. What I also noticed, and perhaps what surprised me the most, is how plain the lead actress, Simone Simon, is. When I say plain, she is not an ugly girl, but she isn't what I had in my mind as a "leading lady." (Molina uses those terms to describe her.) She isn't the traditional leading lady I would imagine from that time period. She is not fat at all, but her bone structure isn't what you would call glamorous. She is very soft. What I loved about her performance and about the actress is that she was a woman, no doubt about that, but she wasn't overly dramatic. She was small, obedient, and someone who looked like they needed protection. This quality is what I find the most interesting. I love that she looked lost for so much of the movie. She looked like she needed someone to show her how to get home. This rings so true for Molina, who isn't literally lost, but I find he is lost in the sense that he doesn't know what to do with his life. He

wants someone to show him what to do, to tell him what to do, just like she wants a husband to come and fix her and tell her what to do as well.

Physically, she has helped me, because she gives me so much variety in the way she sits. I watched the movie and watched the scenes where she was alone as compared to the scenes where she was with someone, and the “show” she puts on in the presence of others is perfect. She remains that soft-spoken, quiet and listening little bride. I loved how she held her hands; something else I used tonight in rehearsal. She never clung to her husband, but would merely touch his arm, or place her hand on his leg, not hold his leg, but just touch it.

Tonight we worked on Act Two. We tried to really iron out those beats we have between one another, especially towards the end of the show. It’s such a process to find those tiny moments where such big choices are made. I know now I make the choice to betray the warden in the first act so that throughout the second act I can try to help Valentin, but I know my life is on the line to do so. We really worked those moments just after I get back from the warden and he tells me I might be leaving. These moments are when I tell Valentin I want to be his friend and then continue into the story, and then I break the story and we continue to talk. The characters wind up in bed together. This section, in particular, needs the specificity of a nuclear warhead. It’s just not quite there, but it will get there. We tried a bunch of different things. We started with me always trying to get from him, but it seemed to be so forceful. We tried the section stationary, but it seemed too still. We didn’t quite find it there tonight, but we will. This section and the section at the end of the play where I leave are the two sections that really have to be in sync beat for beat, second for second, breath for breath. We ended tonight working the

lines in repetition to see if that would help, and we got something out of it. We got to listen to what each other was really saying and for me it helped to hear the story and how the film story is so reflective of the pain I am feeling in those final moments. Again, we need work, but we will find it.

03-01-08

We worked Act One tonight. It is strange to pick up the show from the beginning now. The first half of the show is so much less emotionally raw than the second half of the show. There is a trick to this, because it must remain just as emotionally full as the second act, but the emotional life is being held underneath so much of the formality of the first meeting of these two men. What is also interesting is that Molina breaks down in the second act and finally opens up, but just a like a tea kettle that is about to erupt, he spends a lot of the first act with few clues that he is about to crack.

We started our rehearsal tonight differently than the past couple of rehearsals. We started tonight with Contact Improv, after what I would describe as a Be Boyd warm up. These warm ups help me as an actor not only open up emotionally but connect my voice and my body to the emotional life of the situation. I guess through the use of music, which we added tonight, and through the use of gravity to release into the floor, I find there is a release of tension that allows me, the actor, to be available to whatever may come up in the scene.

We worked the exchange at the beginning of Act One, Scene Three for quite a bit. This is the scene where Molina and Valentin get into their first altercation. This goes into the exchange about being “soft like a woman” (Puig 1359). What I realized is how much this reflects the essence of my paper. There is “nothing wrong with being soft like a

woman” (Puig 1359). This also was the first point in the play chronologically where we found some kind of trouble between the connections of what we are saying and what we are meaning. The interesting thing is we hear what the playwright is trying to say for the first time and I, the actor, found it difficult to find the train of thought. Ryan and I worked through this moment over and over, and both of us seem to be nicely off book at this point so we could actually work. One characteristic I hadn’t noticed about Molina is that Molina seems to hold on to things. Example: in this scene we see the two men finish their meal, move into another conversation, and then after the conversation move past the meal into other subject matters, Molina brings the meal up again, in tears, about how he is upset that Valentin doesn’t say thank you. This is something to work with. Molina is the type who holds on to things and gets upset at other things because there is so much being held in. Like I said earlier, he has all of Act Two to break down. The first act includes those little moments of bursting through.

03-02-08

Tonight we worked through the entire show yet again. We once again had a stop and start rehearsal, and slowly, once again, made our way through the show. But what I’ve worked more than anything else tonight are actions. Trying to link my actions to the truth of the moment and to the physicality I’ve been working with. This is hard. Remaining in a delicate, womanly frame while keeping my intention is difficult. The difficult thing is I am like Molina in a lot of ways, but I am very different as well. I am much more combative. The physicality is something that is coming rather easily for me. What I am having a challenge with is moving from a feminine energy that has more of a spine to a feminine energy that wants to be controlled. What I mean by this is that I like

to lead. If I am dancing, I want to be in control, which is the same in my life. I am not a human being who is very submissive. Trying to find the desire to fall under the control of someone else is something I, the actor, need to explore. How do I find that? I suppose I could jump back to Stanislavski and use the “Magic If.” I am not sure. I am also finding that some of my scoring might be a little bit off. I don’t know if some of my action verbs I’ve chosen might be a little bit too strong. I am using a lot of Broach, attacks, confronts, and need to move into the world of allure, attract, bribe, and things that might be slightly less strong.

I also am going to find some more examples of women in film to draw from. More modern examples might ring more true for me, so I am going to watch and study more contemporary examples of strong women. I am not sure what I am going to watch, but I need something more than just Simone Simon to pull from. So, tonight’s rehearsal was good. It gave me a lot to think about; and thus I have things to jump from and to work on for the next couple of rehearsals.

03-04-08

I have been doing a lot of work over the last couple nights on the show. I read a review of William Hurt’s performance, and the critic was especially judgmental of the final moments of Hurt’s performance saying that he, and I am paraphrasing, “butched it up” towards the end of the movie. The critic was saying that Puig didn’t want this. That Puig wanted to show someone could be feminine and strong. That being courageous does not mean masculine. I loved this thought. How is it different for a woman to be courageous without becoming masculine? Often, even in modern film, we see that women have to become, for lack of a better word, manish. That doesn’t need to be so.

There can be a soft quality to courage. I have thought about some of the feminine heroes of our time. I watched some examples of women in extreme situations in film. My favorite, and one I will be drawing from, is Catherine Zeta Jones in *Traffic*. I watched the scenes she has both with the DEA and her husband in the prison. She remains a housewife through and through. Even when dealing with the drug lords in Mexico, she sits proper and gets tough, not butch. Don't get me wrong, Hurt's performance as Molina is great, but I've read both this review and Puig's own evaluation of the character Hurt created, and both seem to think the character isn't what is written on the page. After watching Simon and others, especially Zeta Jones in *Traffic*, I can see what they are saying. I can show strength and be soft.

While running the show tonight, I focused my secondary awareness on this thought. While I check in a lot with myself about my vocal quality and tension that may be in my body and things along these lines, tonight I kept asking myself am I approaching this from a soft and light angle. I know I cannot make myself a woman. I know I am fighting against my male self to play a woman, but I can get that essence. And often I find myself going to anger and strength in scenes of confrontation. What this taught me is that during the many scenes of confrontation during this show, I am not going into a testosterone driven state of revenge or getting even. I don't need to buck my antlers with Valentin. I can be the Doe in this situation and reason and plead with him. I can lose the fights. I can be the victim of his rage. By taking this abuse, I can still win. I know by the time we get into these fights, he has some regard for my feelings. I know if he sees he hurt me, I will gain ground in the fight, and perhaps win. I loved tonight's discoveries. I still need to balance that with the other scoring I have done.

03-05-08

Something I forget as an actor is the affect I am having on the audience. We ran the show tonight and most of the notes I got were about the affect we were having on the audience. There has to be a fine balance between playing the characters, two very closed off individuals, and remaining closed off as actors. What we found is there are moments in the show Ryan and I are hiding too well. The audience is a part of the theatrical experience, and while rehearsing I can't forget about them. In the show there are moments -- the writing of the letter by Valentin, the discussion of my mother that leaves me hiding in tears by the kitchen, the fight over the cupcake that leads me to tears and those moments on bed where I am feeling the guilt of my spying -- where the Molina is trying to hide what is going on with him from Valentin, but what Brittney was saying is that we can't hide from the audience. Kate Ingram, one of my favorite professors at UCF, often warned us actors to keep our eyes up so we can share with the audience what is going on. This is so true, and we adjusted some of the blocking for these scenes as well as decided on a new place to put the kitchen area so the audience can share these moments with me, even though they are hidden from Valentin. There is a real relationship the actors have with the audience.

I feel better about the new blocking. What was nice in the sections where we were re-working was I could see Brittney's face. Keeping my head up and seeing the affect the pain I am feeling has on the "audience" just proves how strong the relationship is between the action on the stage and those who are watching. This is one more thing I have to keep in the back of my mind. This is a habit I have that needs to be broken, or at least a choice I make and not just a habit that keeps happening.

03-06-08

We had to cancel again tonight. Ryan is not feeling well, and there is nothing I want to do to push him to the point where he won't get better. So, we are taking a night off, and I am going to use this time to look over my lines.

03-07-08

Tonight we ran the show for time, and what I realized about this show is that it is extremely exhausting. We ran the show straight through using what music we have and taking only a ten-minute intermission. The show is running about 2 hours and 5 minutes at this point, and what I am finding is this is like running a marathon. Being on stage that long is nothing short of draining and going through the things Molina goes through, oh man, when we finished, I felt drained.

As far as the work is concerned, I do have some concerns. As an actor, I have a bit of a problem trying to get things right and not trusting the process. I am battling that right now because I don't want to get down on myself that some of the beats aren't there just yet, but I also don't want to be lazy and think it will just fix itself. I know there are some things, lines, etc., that will come with rehearsing, and I know there are times when I need to look at what I am doing and try something else, but after tonight's run, I am not sure which is which. I can't be sure if the show needs to be run more or if I need to be doing more to "fix" it.

During the summers I work as a director at a musical theater camp, and in that role as director I never feel crunched to make it work unless it is a glaring problem. I know that once the kids get those scenes into their bodies, they will be fine. Maybe I

should take my own advice and realize that this was perhaps our first real run of the show, no scripts, no calling “line” and no stopping. The problems will work themselves out -- not all the problems, but a lot of them.

03-08-07

I am a little bit frustrated today. We have decided not to work tomorrow night, because it is the beginning of Spring Break, and we all need a bit of a break. I was looking over some of the work I did last semester in Shakespeare class, and there are a lot of things to be learned from the sounds of the words I am using. Sometimes using sounds too much can become a little bit showy. What I mean is that sometimes the sounds and the use of sounds to play points can become more important than what the words are themselves. This isn't as true in Shakespearean texts or any elevated texts, but in modern texts conversations between two characters can sound forced, especially in smaller spaces such as the black box. But I set aside my personal feelings about the over use of sounds in smaller more intimate shows and looked at the sounds Molina uses in the text. True to form they can be used as a source of inspiration as well. I found the most use for the sounds during the re-telling of the movie. During the more descriptive parts of the movie, I use a lot of buoyancy energy. When I talk about the dresses and the hairstyles, there are a lot of sounds, and as Irina gets more and more angry and jealous, I move into more plosive and suspenseful sounds. We go from “oh, the hair is all scooped up in a bun. Nothing is out of place,” (Puig 1361) with nice, open vowels with few plosives, to sounds like “she is eaten up with jealousy” and “the little bird drops stone dead” (Puig 1361). I started to use the sounds of the consonant orchestra from the Lessac School of training to score the move as I speak it. I have found identifying these sounds throughout

the text that Molina speaks about the film can truly feed the suspense of the movie. If I use a more urgent energy and my plosive sounds to score certain scenes and more soothing vowel sounds for others, the film becomes more active for me. This is important because the opening scene is two pages of Molina telling the film. If we start off boring, then we are never going to win back the audience.

03-09-08

We cancelled rehearsal tonight, but I still did a lot of work on my own. I spent a lot of time working with my lines. I realized as I looked at the text tonight I have been doing a lot of paraphrasing of the lines. Nothing too big, but I've been re-ordering certain parts of the film and adding conjunctions where there are none. Adding the conjunctions changes the pattern of speaking for the character. Molina speaks in short thoughts. He often doesn't have long sentences that go on and on, and speaking with the longer sentences by adding conjunctions changes the way that he thinks. This new sentence structure also has an effect on the scoring of some of the scenes as well. For example; I noticed that during the scene where I get poisoned, I have a few sentences where I try to refuse the food. I tell Valentin, "Skip the chivalry. You have it. Why should I have the big one? I'm not hungry. I don't want it. It's okay. Valentin" (Puig 1361). I have been disregarding these periods. These periods tell me so much. If I look to Shakespearean texts, which I believe a lot of Shakespearean schools of acting have a lot of value in contemporary texts, periods are end stops. These mark the end of a thought. This series of periods inform me how he is thinking. He can't eat the food, but he needs to think of a reason not to. He is grasping for straws in this scene. The way I've been reading the line was almost as one long thought. It is a whole bunch of frantic

little thoughts. If I obeyed the punctuation the playwright has set down, then my job would actually be easier. I also noticed a similar theme in the telling of the film. This is a film he watched many years ago. He is trying to remember exactly what happened in the movie. He doesn't want to disrespect Simone Simon or the film in any way, so he stops, with periods, thanks Manuel Puig, to remember the story. Tonight was a good night for me. I feel comfortable where I am with lines, but tonight was a much-needed break for me. It was a great time for me to examine the text once again and make sure I am not just saying what I want to say.

03-11-08

What more can I let go of? This statement should be the question of the day. Tonight Brittney noticed I had a lot of tension in my body. I tend to release tension fairly well, but when I get stressed out or don't get enough sleep and am not taking care of myself, I find I hold more tension. I do feel overwhelmed right now and that feeling is creeping into my work. We warmed up tonight for quite a bit because I requested some extra time to unwind from the day. The extra time did seem to take a lot of the tension away, but not all of it. I found I was not breathing all the way down, and I could feel the tension crawling into my shoulders. My upper back and shoulders were being held so tightly. During our ten-minute break Brittney told me to relax, which is what she was seeing, but for some reason it seemed to make me tense more. I was now more aware that I was holding tension and felt myself holding tension even more than I had been before.

My work was hindered by this tension. Tension, as Misner says, is the enemy of the actor. I guess he knew what he was talking about. The tension I had tonight was

literally blocking my emotional responses. That is the crazy thing about the body. The body, which is physical, can literally hold all of your emotions back through tension. I know this is a small glitch in the rehearsal process, and we are bound to have bad days in the run of a show, but tonight felt really bad. J.J. often talks to us about our suck-o-meter. Mine was going through the roof tonight.

03-12-07

I started doing an intense character analysis over the past few days. This was given to me by Samantha Stern, another graduate student, and the one she used to help her thesis project. Joe Kemper also used it for his as well and both said it helped them to understand the character. What I have found, just in the beginning phases of the character analysis, is that it is helping me connect the importance of things I wasn't thinking about before. The character is supposed to be a living, breathing human being. I am a living, breathing human being and as such we both, the character and I, have opinions about almost everything. Things I hadn't been thinking about were things like how much the food meant to me. If I were in prison, what would it mean to me to get a package of food? What does the food mean in terms of my power over the warden and over Valentin? How much care do I use while preparing the food? Before I had started this I was simply "going through the motions of making food." I wasn't invested in the pride I had. I felt so much of the character analysis bleed into my work tonight without even thinking about it. This truly has moved me several steps forward, and I am not even done with it. I know that as students we are often asked to fill out these kinds of questionnaires so we can understand the character and we moan, but for me this has

helped so much. The analysis I have used for this project is very thorough. That helps. This is helping me with my specificity as well.

For example, I was having trouble with the cake scene, where Valentin blows up and throws the cake. Tonight when I looked at that cake, I knew how much it meant to me and the emotional life was just there. It just came pouring out. I have talked a lot about imagination, but the mind and the imagination are such amazing things if we can give them the food they need to really serve us as actors. Since I have started to feed my mind and imagination with all of the information in this analysis, it is serving me back in the work that it is allowing me to do.

03-13-08

Today we did a line through in the morning and that is where we stopped as far as rehearsal today. We did this so we could first and foremost brush up on our lines, but, more importantly, so we could brush up on the cues as well. Being that there are only two characters in the play, we want to make sure we are not causing any lag time. I was good on most of my lines. There are some things I need to review, but all and all I am feeling confident about the text as it stands right now.

We spent some time orally reworking the sections where we are fighting and then there is a pause. It was almost like we treated these sections today as if they were a musical score and went through and scored in our rests and beats. In some ways, this is the way I like to work. Score the show out like it's a dance and then reinsert the emotional life back into it.

03-14-08

Tonight we had our second to last run in the trailer. I am just ready to move at this point. The run was a solid run. The work we did yesterday scoring the text really helped us. Both Ryan and I were really on our game tonight. We did an extended warm up. Brittney says she thinks the show is in really good shape. What is nice about the scoring we did yesterday, musically, is that it also can help feed emotional life of the scenes as well. I found the sections Ryan and I really hammered out yesterday are much more alive and fully realized than they have been in the past. I don't really know what to say about tonight's run other than I feel good and ready to get going.

03-16-08

Tonight was the last night we are working in the trailer. I will be thankful when we move over to the space tomorrow and don't have to worry about moving all of the props from my car to the space and back again at the end of the night. This is a very props heavy show, and as a word to the wise for any future graduate students who plan on doing their own thesis projects, do not select a show that needs either a lot of food or a lot of props. This show calls for a ton of both. We have so many things we have been lugging in and out of that trailer, not to mention the cost of having actual food in the show. This show calls for tea, beans, chicken; a lot of water, cakes (they get thrown, which causes a mess) and most of this stuff is consumed on stage. Until the last couple of rehearsals, we have either been miming the food or using food that isn't quite what we would be using. For the past couple of rehearsals we have been using real cakes and real chicken, which has led to a couple of issues we could not have foreseen. Chicken is greasy, which causes the following scenes to be a little weird with the touching of each

other's faces and our hands are covered in chicken fat. We also realized we need to put some kind of trash can on stage to dump all the food in. By the end of the night, that trash can was disgusting. It was covered in milk, chicken, a cupcake, and lots of luke warm tea. It is nice to be using real props. In most of my past experiences, I have gotten to a point in the rehearsal process where I need the space. I don't know if it is because I need to change the scenery or if the show gets to a point where it outgrows the rehearsal space. I am at that point right now with this show. I need to get into the space. There is a feeling about the space, about moving out of rehearsal space and moving into the space I am going to actually use. We had a nice run tonight, but I think both Ryan and I are tired at this point, and the change of the scenery will be what we need to reinvigorate the show.

The show wasn't bad tonight, but the energy seemed to be falling quite a bit. We have gone so far this week it feels a little bit like a plateau. It feels like we have taken just a small step back tonight. We need lighting and costumes and the space to keep the show moving forward. I once heard that when working in film, even films in which they rehearse a lot before they film, the actors don't feel like the character until they climb into the clothes the character would wear. I feel the same way. Until I step out of my clothes and what I am comfortable wearing and into the uniforms we have for the show, until I get out of the trailer and into the space with lights and sounds, I feel held back. I would love to get over this without help, but right now I need the help of costumes and set.

03-17-08

Tonight we had our first tech rehearsal. This always seems to be such a downer because we are just getting to a place where we are doing some good work and we have to slow down so much because we are worrying about things like lights and sounds. We have most of the cues written, but we have never run the show with tech. We also have costumes and all of the props for the first time, yet one more thing to add to the stress of having a run tonight. Not to mention that tonight is the night that Professor Weaver, the Chair of my thesis committee, is going to come and watch. I know as actors we should not be concerned about what others are thinking, but there is that secondary awareness that actors have that respond to the audience. I hate having the first run that Professor Weaver watches be the first time we are incorporating all of these things. And these things did seem to throw me off quite a bit.

I couldn't help but think about the way the show was looking for the entire first act. I also know I didn't spend enough time warming up tonight, and I could feel it throughout the first act. I just wasn't there emotionally. I wasn't giving or taking anything from Ryan, and I was very much "in my head." I hate some of those terms, "in my head," but I wasn't there completely. That's what I mean. The only part of my body that seemed to be part of the show at all was my mind, rather than my entire body. Professor Be Boyd talks a lot about the exchange of breath and how important that is to acting. We do a lot of breath work in her classes, and what I found is I was holding a lot of tension in my stomach and not truly breathing. Therefore, I wasn't in the scene. I found I was so concerned about the tech that there were times I wasn't even looking at Ryan. As we moved into Act Two, I found I was more relaxed. Professor Weaver told

me not to worry about the tech, that the tech would work itself out, and that advice was nice to hear. I wanted to impress Professor Weaver, and thus I was thinking about him and not even worried about Ryan, who was my scene partner. Once I let what Professor Weaver was thinking about the performance go and started to focus on the scenes I was in, I felt much better. I also found it interesting that Professor Weaver thought some of the moments were funny. I guess because we have never had anyone watch the show. So, the fact that there was someone there and laughing at some of the moments was interesting. I guess it is funny that Valentin gets a hard on.

03-18-08

Tonight's rehearsal was much more of a success than last night's. There are growing pains from moving into the new space, but that is to be expected. Man, I love what lighting can do for a show. There is something incredibly powerful about the mood lighting can set. I am not saying that with this piece I am trying to play mood, but moving from the trailer into this space is extreme. We are moving from a well-lit trailer that has unforgiving florescent lighting to the black box theater, which is dark and has professional lighting. The lighting we have worked out for the show gives the real sense that we are in a smaller enclosed space. We also add another element tonight. We have a painted outline around the cell. These two things, the lighting and the painting on the floor, have really added to the sense of entrapment of the two characters. I have spent a lot of time over the years teaching young children about acting, and in the sessions I have had with them, we talk a lot about building the environment for their characters. Often these environments are forests or jungles or wild kingdoms for the younger children, but I tell them to use their imagination to build the environment. I try to live by the rules I

teach, but I must say having the paint and the props and the lights have greatly helped my imagination build the environment that Molina lives in. The mind is a strange thing. The visual building of a fake cell with paint on the floor has changed my environment so greatly. This is what I needed. I needed this space.

03-19-08

Tonight we had our final dress. Things are in good shape. We are at a good place to be opening. We had some tech issues, but both Brittney and Chico assured me they would work out things for tomorrow night. What really hit me tonight was when Ryan was asking me where things hurt. I have been going through a lot of stuff recently and have pushed all of my attention into the show and haven't taken anytime to think about the things that are going on in my life. When he asked me where it hurts and started rubbing my chest it felt not only like a release of Molina but a release for Mike as well. Acting is an art form that cannot be removed from the artist. The artist is a part of the piece of art as it is happening, and there are bound to be times when the actor as a human being and the piece of art they are creating will collide. For that second there was that dual reality that lives in the theater so often. Because I have never done the things Molina has done or lived through the things Molina has, I find the things I have been through in my life that are the closest to the things that Molina has lived through are sometimes stirred up.

I am confident about the show tomorrow. I think we are ready. I know I am ready. What is interesting about going through this process is I have recently watched another grad student go through this process with a large cast. I love having just the two of us. We don't have to worry about each other not giving what we need. We know we

can communicate what we need from one another. I don't have to worry about offending Ryan, and he doesn't have to worry about offending me. We talk so much outside the rehearsal process that we often know when there is something on each other's minds, and this helps. We can get everything out before we start and focus on our work. That has been one of the blessings about working with Ryan and not working with a whole bunch of different personalities. Communication has been made so much easier, and therefore the work seems to reflect that. Communication is key.

03-20-08 (Show)

Tonight we had our opening night. I was extremely nervous before we went on, because this has been such a labor to get to its feet. It's also all student-run and produced and lit and directed, and it can be scary to show the world something you have worked so hard on. Tonight Professor Weaver was there again, which was actually comforting to me. I felt I was a little bit stiff through the first few moments of the show, but Ryan and I have rehearsed it so much that we fell into the groove we have gotten ourselves to. This groove is a good thing. We have the story in our bodies so much that the emotional life seems to have become muscle memory. I have worked in this space before. I have worked this close to audiences before, but what I realized at the end of the show was I hadn't had an experience like this before. I felt like it was only me and Ryan in the room. I felt like we were alone. I really had not felt like this, in this space, before. There is something to be said about the amount of focus the two of us had to create for that kind of solitude. I also felt like we, for the most part, hit the marks we had set for ourselves throughout the course of the play. We have a nice road map we can follow, and even where there were those few moments that I felt there was a bump or two on our road

map, the map has been so clearly laid that we could just jump right back on to the tracks we have set and keep on moving.

The audience really liked the show as well. We did get a standing ovation, which may or may not mean something about the opinion they had about the show. What I found really interesting is that those who stayed after the performance really had nothing but kind things to say about the show and about the performances that both Ryan and I gave. I really left the theater being very proud of the work I had done in the show. There is a lot of good work in the show, and furthermore, for me, I can see the progress I have made as an actor through this piece. Where I started as an actor before this program, and where I am leaving now, are such different places.

03-21-08 (Show)

Tonight was our best run we have had. We were just in the zone. There are those shows you have where you just feel alive and in the moment from the very minute you step onto stage. This was one of those nights. Ryan and I were just there for each other through the whole show. We were really there to support one another as actors, and I felt we were really affecting each other as we moved through the moments we have worked to construct. There was electricity I could feel on the stage. I have felt this before but often I find I get lazy once I start to feel this electricity and suddenly to my surprise the electricity goes away. I am aware of this and made an effort at intermission not to let my energy die. This has been a challenge throughout this process, keeping the energy alive throughout the whole show. I have talked earlier about how it is like a marathon already, but it's even more true with an audience there. There are more bodies in the room, and

sharing the story with all these people simply takes more energy. Tonight, I actually did another warm-up during the intermission. This kept me alive. I didn't want to have a great first act and feel like I was falling flat during the second half of the show. But we kept that electricity throughout the rest of the show and finished really well. I just had such a good time tonight and just wish I could keep this feeling for our final performance tomorrow night. This show, as rough as it can be emotionally, is so much fun to do.

This show really is a purging of my emotions for me. I love to do it and feel so good after I am done. It makes me feel like I am living. I guess all those emotions happening to you can have that effect on a person. When I leave the theater at night I am just so jazzed. I am having trouble describing it, but it's a really good feeling.

03-22-08 (Show)

Tonight was the closing night of the show. Again, I feel like the show the three of us have put together is a solid piece of work. We have gotten to a point where Ryan and I don't have to be nervous. There is, of course, adrenaline but the nerves or fear of judgment doesn't seem to be there. My father came to see the show tonight, and he has seen a lot of my work. He is a man of so few words, but he seemed to be so proud in the few words he spoke. He really thought the performance was interesting. He has seen the movie, of course, and the musical, but he has never seen the play version, although he is very familiar with the book. He said there was honesty to the performance and a real relationship between the two of us that he, as an audience member, could feel. What I respect about my father is he will be very honest with me, especially with my work as an actor, and to get the kind words from him is something that really can be treasured.

There is a lot for me to be proud of. I am really proud of my work I've done in this show. I am so thankful for both Brittney and Ryan. I wish the show would run just a few more times, because there is a lot more for the two of us to explore, and if we had a few more times to run the show, we could find some more little clues that might be throughout the show to indicate where the relationship might go. I loved those little moments, the moments where the outsiders can see the compassion for the characters to start to creep in. If we had just a few more times to go through the text, perhaps even a few more rehearsals, then we could find just one or two more of those moments.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

*“It was a short dream, but a pleasant one.”
- Molina*

The quote above reflects both Molina’s thoughts on his relationship with Valentin but my thoughts on this process. This project will live with me forever and this thesis will always remain a reflection of my process.

The challenge of Molina is to fall into stereotype. I maintained a focus on Molina as a human being. Careful not to forget how he felt as a person, but allowing my own personal history to fall into the Magic “If” and guide the character to a fully realized portrayal of a human being.

To build on the power of my imagination, I utilized research about the playwright and his childhood culture to continue to flesh out Molina. In particular, the culture of machismo and Puig’s own love affair with film aided in the building of a fully realized character. My new understanding of Argentine culture and the oppression of homosexuals and women in Latin American society fueled the feelings of solitude and desires of acceptance expressed by Molina.

A gift given to me, the actor, was Molina’s discussions with Valentin about his own past. I found this information most helpful throughout the process. But this information on its own would not have been enough for me to fully realize the character. What this thesis process has taught me is the education I have received in this master’s program has enabled me to capture the truth of a complicated character such as Molina. The research I have done would have been useless had I not had tools learned in the studio work in the program. Upon reviewing my journal, I realize where I stand as an

actor. The truth is the most important factor in the art of acting to this actor. The truth is greatly enhanced and enriched by the research but remains the essence of what I appreciate about the theater arts.

As many minorities, homosexuals are often stereotyped for comic effect. What Puig has done is create a character who, beyond all preconceived notions of what he should be, reveals a complicated and complex reality of who he actually is. Beyond stereotypes and prejudices, all Molina, or people like him, want is love. And in the end, love was all he had.

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